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## **National Guard State Active-Duty Mobilization Fund**

Good afternoon, Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the Government, Labor and Elections Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 896, the National Guard State Active-Duty Mobilization Fund.

HB 896 significantly enhances the responsiveness of the Maryland National Guard by ensuring rapid mobilization and sustained operational readiness. With quick access to financial resources, the Guard can deploy personnel and equipment without delay, maintain essential vehicles and communication systems, and procure critical supplies such as fuel and food.

The Maryland National Guard responds to a wide range of emergencies—from the statewide snowstorm that blanketed

Maryland just weeks ago, to the smaller but still significant storm that struck the Eastern Shore this past weekend. Our history of response spans weather events, civil disturbances such as the 2015 Baltimore riots and the January 6th riots in Washington, D.C., and hurricane relief operations like our response to Hurricane Helene in North Carolina.

We have also supported pandemic response during COVID-19. These missions range from small, localized efforts to large-scale statewide deployments—and the Guard must be prepared to respond at any scale, at any time, for any type of emergency.

The challenge is financial. When the Governor activates the National Guard for State Active Duty, these emergency operations are not budgeted in our normal operating funds.

The Maryland Military Department must pay all costs—personnel pay, allowances, and meals—directly from our operational budget up front.

We then submit a reimbursement request to the State, but depending on when the event occurs, that reimbursement may not arrive until late in the fiscal year, which presents insurmountable challenges to execute previously planned projects.

This creates a serious problem: I cannot over-execute our budget. When I need to execute a contract or obligate funds later in the year, I cannot do so with confidence if I do not know whether reimbursement is coming and when. This uncertainty puts critical operations at risk.

HB 896 solves this by establishing a non-lapsing special fund that gives the Adjutant General immediate access to dedicated resources for State Active-Duty operations. This fund removes the dependency on reimbursement timing, protects the Department's operating budget, and ensures seamless coordination with local, state, and federal partners—without disruption or delay.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 896. Thank you for your time and consideration.