

March 7, 2023

2023 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY  
HB0789 Public Safety – State Disaster Recovery Fund

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: Testimony of Support of House Bill 0789

BILL ANALYSIS: Establishing the State Disaster Recovery Fund to provide disaster-related assistance to units of local government for individuals and families and the repair or replacement of public facilities, and for low-interest or no-interest loans to businesses and nonprofits when a federal disaster declaration is not received; requiring the fund to provide disaster-related assistance for the unmet needs of individuals and families after a federal disaster declaration or in the event of a certain denial of federal assistance; etc.

SIGNED: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FRSC)

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record **in SUPPORT of H.B. 0789**. I am submitting this letter on behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC) on behalf of the Council, and it does not necessarily represent the views of the State of Maryland. The Maryland General Assembly established the FSRC in the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise, to work toward a common goal of a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19. Food production, distribution, and access were all interrupted, leaving Marylanders scrambling to ensure they had enough to eat. While the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic meant federal aid was available eventually, other disasters caused the same impacts on a more localized level. There are no reliable assistance programs in the State today.

H.B. 0789 establishes a disaster recovery fund to be administered by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM), and it will fill a critical gap in Maryland's disaster recovery capabilities. The bill will also enable MDEM to establish much-needed minimum reporting criteria to gather disaster-related impact data, which will support ongoing disaster relief and recovery efforts and assist the FSRC in understanding the impact of disasters on the food system at the local level.

This Fund will, among other things, assist individuals by providing access to funding to replace lost food. It will also offer low- or no-interest loans to small businesses impacted by disaster. No one should go hungry because of a disaster out of their control. Food businesses critical for access to food in underserved neighborhoods should be supported to maintain their foot in the community.

On behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council, I would like to record SUPPORT of H.B. **0789**.

Sincerely,

Michael J Wilson  
Chair, Communication and Coordination Committee  
Maryland Food System Resiliency Council