

Maryland Association of Counties (MACo)

Johnny Olszewski, Jr., Baltimore County Executive and 2024 MACo President

Michael Sanderson, MACo Executive Director

MACo 2024 Legislative Session Snapshot

RESULTS

24 Counties, 1 Voice
County jurisdictions direct ALL MACo positions through weekly meetings www.mdcounties.org

80%
Of Bills Reached MACo's Desired Outcome

METHODS

411
Policy Blog Articles Written & Viewed by
91K
Readers

70K
Social Media Impressions

Participated in
584
Meetings

936
Bills Analyzed

Delivered
356
Pieces of Testimony

-  Successfully Defended Local Road Funding
-  Guided Sensible Housing Reforms
-  Retained Local Role in Energy Siting
-  Resolved Liability Limbo for Sheriffs
-  Remedied Property Assessments Glitch

Some Good Outcomes	Some Hard-Fought Compromises	Some Lingering Issues
<p>State's Budget and Fiscal Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation shortfall threatened local roads - Great outcome! HUR protected, fight next yr. 	<p>Affordable Housing Focus Yields Multiple Bills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broad density/incentives bill passes, with heavy local input, many changes. - Optional "vacancy tax" 	<p>State Budget Situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-year forecast looks upside-down, with revenue weakness and Blueprint costs ahead. - Issues will remain, FY26+
<p>Solar/Energy Siting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple efforts to reduce local oversight failed. - Issue will remain active in years ahead- a hot topic 	<p>Paid Leave Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation timetable pushed back to July '25 - Avoided large fees on private plan employers 	<p>Community College Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cade formula rewritten; proposed cutback halved - Study/work ahead to refine student count, etc.
<p>Court-ordered Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local option w/State, less burden on jails/hospitals 	<p>Adult-use Cannabis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More clarity on on-site locations, limitations 	<p>Blueprint Pressures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs and implementation remain challenging

TWO TRICKY ZONING-RELATED ISSUES FROM THE 2024 SESSION

HB 538 – GOVERNOR’S AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE

“DENSITY BONUSES”
FOR ACHIEVABLE
HOUSING

CERTAIN STATE-SUPPORTED
PROJECTS NARROWED
BONUSES, NON-STACKABLE

OVERRIDE LOCAL
ADEQUATE PUBLIC
FACILITIES ORDINANCE?

OUT OF THE BILL –
OVERCROWDING CONCERNS

CANNOT BACK-DOOR
DENY HOUSING
PROJECTS

NARROWED LANGUAGE RULES
OUT A “DE FACTO DENIAL”
THROUGH NON-ZONING

HB 805 – CANNABIS ZONING FOLLOW-UP BILL

GENERAL
REASONABLENESS
ON-SITE LOCATIONS

CANNOT CREATE LIMITS
STRICTER THAN THOSE IN PLACE
FOR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE
SELLERS

DISTANCE FROM
SENSITIVE SITES

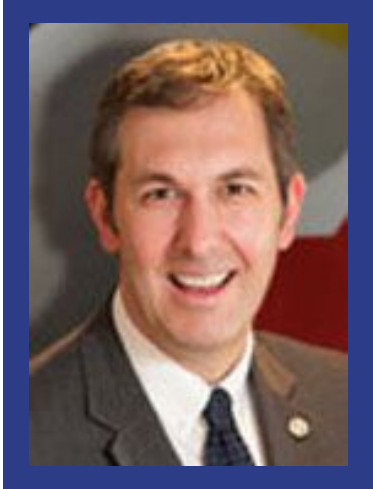
UP TO 1/2 MILE
FROM ANOTHER DISPENSARY
500 FT FROM SCHOOL, PARK,
CHURCH, ETC

NOT IN
“NEIGHBORHOODS”

AT LEAST 100FT FROM
RESIDENTIAL AREA



2024 Officers and Executive Committee of MACo's Board of Directors



John Olszewski, Jr.
2024 President, MACo
County Executive
Baltimore County



Jack Wilson
First Vice President, MACo
Commissioner
Queen Anne's County



MC Keegan-Ayer
Second Vice President, MACo
Council Member
Frederick County



Lenny Pfeffer
Secretary, MACo
Council President
Dorchester County



Danielle Hornberger
Treasurer, MACo
County Executive
Cecil County



Calvin Ball
Past President, MACo
County Executive
Howard County



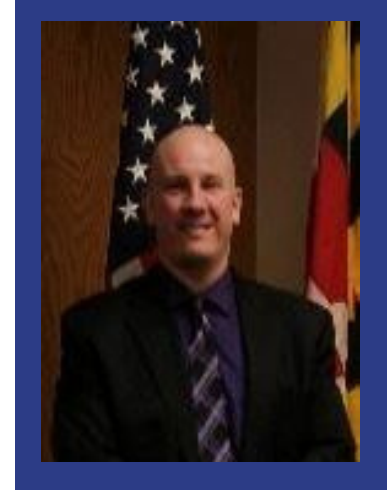
2024 Members of MACo's Board of Directors



Stuart Pittman
County Executive
Anne Arundel County



Ed Rothstein
Commissioner President
Carroll County



Paul Edwards
Chair, Board of Commissioners
Garrett County



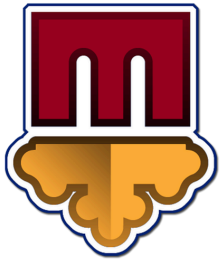
Reuben Collins II, Esq.
Commissioner President
Charles County



Sharon Green Middleton
Council Vice President
Baltimore City



Bob Cassilly
County Executive
Harford County



MARYLAND
Association of
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2024 Members of MACo's Board of Directors



Craig Mathies
Commissioner
Somerset County



Marc Elrich
County Executive
Montgomery County






Angela Alsobrooks
County Executive
Prince George's County



James (Randy) Guy
President, Commissioners of
St. Mary's County



2024 End of Session Wrap-Up: Government Liability and Courts

 Sarah Sample -  April 9, 2024 -  Government Liability and Courts

The segments below provide a brief overview of MACo's work in the area of government liability and courts in the 2024 General Assembly session.

County governments enforce laws, employ county residents, and maintain facilities throughout Maryland. Therefore county governments may be subject to acting as defendants in court, litigating cases involving employment benefits, injuries sustained on county properties, and various other subjects. MACo advocates on behalf of county governments to clarify the unique role that they serve as employers and public institutions, ensuring the balance of public interests that account for the burden placed upon taxpayers by excessive litigation.

Maryland's 446th legislative session convened amidst a substantial concern over the State's fiscal situation, with weakened revenues and cost increases for many services at every level of government. Despite the fiscal limitations, a wide range of policy issues received a full debate, with many resolutions arising from the 90-day annual process. MACo's legislative committee guided the association's positions on hundreds of bills, yielding many productive compromises and gains spanning counties' uniquely wide portfolio.

Follow these links for more coverage on our [Conduit Street](#) blog and [Legislative Database](#).

Conduit Street Blog: A clearinghouse of information on issues affecting Maryland's county governments.





CONDUIT STREET
1696

News and information for Maryland's counties

Civil Litigation



**NEEDS
MORE WORK**

MACo supported *HB 549- Statute of Limitations – Prosecution or Enforcement of Local Consumer Protection Codes*. This bill would have established a timeline of three years for a local jurisdiction to file a claim against an entity in violation of a local consumer protection code. This timeline would begin at the time the offense was committed. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



**NEEDS
MORE WORK**

MACo supported *SB 1180- Criminal Law – Threats Against Government Officials and Employees – Expansion*. This bill would have prohibited a person from threatening an immediate family member of a State or local government official or employee. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#)

Court Fines and Fees



MACo supported *HB 501/SB 522- Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws*. This bill increases the maximum fine that a charter county, through its "home rule" authority, may levy for a violation of a local ordinance. Additionally, it applies to charter county enforcement of the Fair Housing Act of 1988 and any local employment or public accommodation discrimination laws. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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Court Regulations



MACo supported *HB 895/SB 793- Maryland Tort Claims Act – Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs – County Responsibility*. This bill clarifies how cases should be brought against a sheriff or deputy, for actions taken in the course of performing a local law enforcement or detention center function. These types of public safety officials are State employees who perform a narrow set of local functions and this bill outlines procedures for tort claims to be filed based on existing liability standards. ***This bill***

passed the 2024 session.

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 585/SB 480-Protecting Election Officials Act of 2024*. This bill protects and defends the staff who manage and conduct elections locally, by making it a misdemeanor to threaten election officials or their immediate family members. Counties must be able to rely on capable and willing candidates to ensure the integrity of the election process. Protecting these employees will ensure vital election roles are filled for years to come. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

Traffic Safety



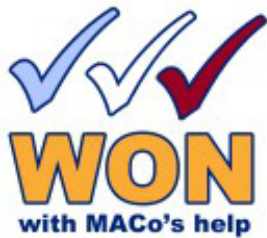
MACo supported *HB 344/SB 345- Transportation – Vision Zero Advisory Commission – Establishment*. This bill establishes the Vision Zero Advisory Commission to reduce the number of vehicle-related deaths by making roadways safer for all residents regardless of transportation mode. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

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MACo opposed *HB 356/SB 406- School Bus Stops – Monitoring Cameras and Safety Measures*. This bill would have required county law enforcement agencies to issue a warning instead of a citation for a certain school bus stop violation on state highways. MACo opposed this bill, as a warning, without a civil fine, does not elicit the same response as when an actual penalty accompanies the violation. A first-time penalty is proven to drastically reduce recidivism rates immediately, advancing the true policy goal: safer roadways for students. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 513/SB 479- Motor Vehicles – Work Zone Speed Control Systems – Revisions (Maryland Road Worker Protection Act of 2024)* with amendments. This bill expands State and local authority for the use of unmanned speed cameras in designated work zones on roadways with at least a 45 miles per hour speed limit. It also increases the fee that can be assessed for a violation recorded by a speed monitoring device in a designated work zone, reflecting the severity of those offenses. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 601/SB 442- Street Racing and Exhibition Driving – Prohibited Acts, Enforcement, and Penalties*. This bill establishes prohibited acts, penalties, and enforcement for exhibition driving. Additionally, it authorizes statewide procedures for sanctioned special event zones on highways in local jurisdictions. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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MACo took no position on *HB 1001- Motor Vehicles – Automated Enforcement Programs – Privacy Protections*, but submitted a Letter of Information. This bill was attempting to clarify the use of and access to images recorded by automated enforcement programs by law enforcement. Additionally it aimed to also regulate various procedures and operational requirements for automated enforcement programs run by local governments. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)





MACo supported *SB 943/HB 107 – Vehicle Laws – Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024)*. This bill expands, statewide, the authority of a county to install and manage bus obstruction monitoring systems. It also clarifies acceptable and prohibited activities in designated bus lanes as well as the designated bus stops and curb spaces. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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2024 End of Session Wrap-Up: Planning and Zoning

 Dominic Butchko -  April 10, 2024 -

 Housing and Community Development / MACo Testimony / Planning and Zoning / Transportation and Public Works

The segments below provide a brief overview of MACo's work on planning and zoning policy in the 2024 General Assembly session.

Planning and zoning is an integral function of county governments and an area that spurs a high level of interaction with residents and business owners. In its planning & zoning advocacy, MACo seeks to protect the ability of local governments – those closest to the people and with the most insight into local needs for growth and reservation – to balance community and business interests.

Maryland's 446th legislative session convened amidst a substantial concern over the State's fiscal situation, with weakened revenues and cost increases for many services at every level of government. Despite the fiscal limitations, a wide range of policy issues received a full debate, with many resolutions arising from the 90-day annual process. MACo's legislative committee guided the association's positions on hundreds of bills, yielding many productive compromises and gains spanning counties' uniquely wide portfolio.



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Reporting and Funds



MACo opposed *HB 1449/SB 1045- Zoning – Board of Appeals Decisions or Zoning Actions – Judicial Review*. This bill would have broadly expanded the universe of certain individuals who could seek judicial review of zoning actions, including comprehensive planning or rezoning actions. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 131- Housing Development Permit Applications – Local Reporting Requirements* with amendments. This bill requires the largest counties – above 150,000 population – to comply with certain reporting requirements related to permitting applications. Counties proposed amendments to provide greater clarity to the bill. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 831- Common Ownership Communities and Zoning Authorities – Operation of Family Child Care Homes – Limitations* with amendments. This bill would have placed certain restrictions on cooperative housing corporations and local jurisdictions in relation regulating the number of children allowed in a family child care and large family child care homes. Counties offered procedural amendments to restrain county authority but to retain the ability to reflect infrastructure limitations where they posed a major concern ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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MACo took no position on *HB 1374- Environment – Crematory – Setback Requirements and Permits*, but submitted a Letter of Information providing county input. This bill would have established a 1000-foot buffer between certain types of properties and a crematory. MACo highlighted some caution on the potential impact of HB 1374 and suggested clarifying language which would have satisfied county leaders' concerns. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

Residential and Local Construction



MACo supported *HB 538/SB 484- Land Use – Affordable Housing – Zoning Density and Permitting (Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024)* with amendments. This bill makes several changes to the land use article enabling higher density bonuses under three different scenarios, authorizing the use of manufactured housing, and loosening restrictions related to adequate public facility ordinances. Counties offered amendments to both strengthen this

legislation and ease local apprehensions. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 3/SB 356- Land Use – Expedited Development Review Processes for Affordable Housing – Requirements* with amendments. This bill would have required counties to establish and implement an expedited development review process for nonprofit and local housing authority projects that meet certain conditions. MACo amendments would have ensured that the legislation was implementable. Neither the House nor Senate advanced the bill before the

crossover deadline. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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MACo supported *HB 7/SB 203- Housing Innovation Pilot Program and Housing Innovation Fund – Establishment (Housing Innovation Pilot Program Act of 2024)*. This bill provides counties with additional resources through the Housing Innovation Pilot Program, incentivizing the development of county-owned affordable housing projects. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 13/SB 199- Residential Property – Affordable Housing Land Trusts – Authority to Establish Condominium Regimes*. This bill enables local Affordable Housing Land Trusts to establish condominium regimes. ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo took no position on *HB 241/SB 308- Housing and Community Development – Just Community Designation*, but submitted a Letter of Information. This bill establishes a “Just Community Designation” and grants the Governor discretion to “identify state programs under which a Just Community shall receive priority for State funding.” ***This bill passed the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 503/SB 586- Public Safety – Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing for Fuel Gas Piping Systems – Requirements and Prohibitions*. This bill would have required that corrugated stainless steel tubing (CSST) meet certain requirements in order to be sold, transferred, or distributed. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

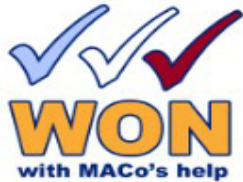
[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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MACo supported *HB 805/SB 537- Cannabis – Licensee Locations – Restrictions* with amendments. This bill attempts to provide more clarity regarding certain land use elements related to the placement of cannabis dispensaries and outdoor growing facilities. MACo proposed a series of amendments to the bill. **This bill passed the 2024 session.**

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 926/SB 1033- Maryland Building Performance Standards – Local Requests for Guidance – Religious Considerations*. This bill requires the Department of Labor, on the request of a county, to provide guidance on the implementation and enforcement of the Maryland Building Performance Standards in relation to any religious observance, practice, or belief. **This bill passed the 2024 session.**

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 69- Community Development Administration – Live Near Where You Teach Program – Establishment*. This bill would have established the Live Near Where You Teach program, which would have offered rental and homebuyer assistance for school staff. **This bill did not pass the 2024 session.**

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

Solar Logistics



MACo opposed *HB 1046/SB 1025- Public Utilities – Distributed Generation Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity*. This bill would have removed virtually any community-level input into the siting and approval of energy projects from 2-5 megawatts in scope, and would have mandated that the Public Service Commission (PSC) approve, not merely consider, a project that meets certain modest guidelines, regardless of any other factors. **This bill did not pass the 2024 session.**

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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News and information for Maryland's counties



MACo supported *HB 1265/SB 1054- Local Government – Building Permits for Residential Solar Energy and Residential Energy Storage Systems – Required Platform and Inspections* with amendments. This bill would have mandated counties to adopt one specific tool, Solar APP+, for processing permit applications for installing solar on existing residential rooftops. MACo proposed amendments to bring some flexibility to this requirement. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session, but limited portions this bill were amended into SB783/HB1435, [Brighter Tomorrow Act](#).***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 1328/SB 1082- Solar Energy and Energy Storage – Development and State Procurement* with amendments. This bill attempted to continue conversations that stakeholders were conducting to try and find a consensus legislative package aimed at meeting the state's ambitious solar energy goals. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo supported *HB 1367- Public Utilities – Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity – Energy Storage Devices* with amendments. This bill would have required energy storage devices above 1MW to receive Public Service Commission approval before beginning construction. MACo requested that language be added clearly preserving state and local authority related to fire suppression standards, siting within proximity of residential areas, and other aesthetic and safety requirements. HB 1367, as drafted, placed its current authority into an area of law where local input is very limited, as pre-empted by the State's full occupation of the law. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)



MACo opposed *HB 1407- County Tier 1 Renewable Sources – Generating Systems, Capacity, and Generation – Prohibition, Studies, and Plans*. This bill, among other actions, would have totally undermined county environmental protections and siting authority for energy-generating systems listed as a Tier 1 renewable resource. ***This bill did not pass the 2024 session.***

[Bill Information](#) | [MACo Coverage](#)

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Mandatory Charter, and Open Incorporation, Both Appear Defeated

Michael Sanderson - March 21, 2024 -

County Government and Structure / General Assembly News / Planning and Zoning / Taxes and Revenues / Transportation and Public Works

Two bills introduced and heard in the House of Delegates dealing with “structure of local government” matters appear to have been passed over for the 2024 session. One would have required all counties to adopt full executive/council charter government, and the other would have removed county review/approval of proposed municipal incorporations.

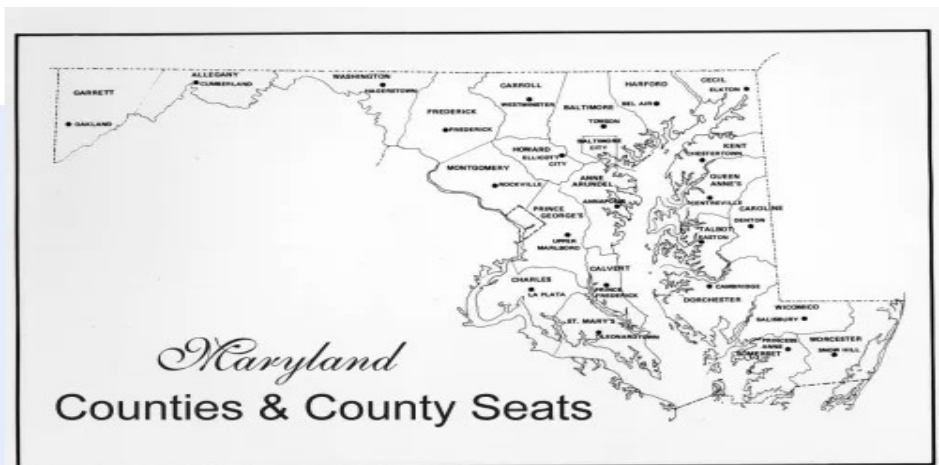
With the “crossover” deadline now behind us, legislation that has not received approval from its original committee appears more likely to be defeated this session, even without a final vote yet being recorded.

[HB 81](#) would have required each county to adopt a full charter government, and establish “home rule” under an executive/council structure – the model currently adopted by 10 of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions. MACo had opposed the State mandate on this matter, noting that current law affords the residents of each county to guide and sculpt their own form of representation.

From [the MACo testimony](#):

“ The advent of “home rule,” adopted by popular vote of county residents, grants multiple pathways to more independent

self-governance, through either adoption of Code Home Rule powers, or through the formation and voter approval of a county charter, which serves a role analogous to a constitution. 18 of Maryland’s 24 subdivisions have adopted home rule through these processes, with the guidance and approval of their voters – resulting in multiple structures and styles to serve local needs. Guidance by local voters is the hallmark of this structure – but is upended by HB 81.



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[HB 1436](#) would have altered the process for residents of an area to advance toward municipal incorporation, but would do by removing the current approval of the county governing body. MACo's concerns focused on numerous areas where current law rewards a municipal area, at the expense of the surrounding county or other local governments.

From [the MACo testimony](#):



From the fiscal perspective, wide-open incorporation could pose comparable concerns. Under Maryland law, county income tax receipts from municipal residents are shared with the city or town. Residents in select enclaves in virtually any county could incorporate merely to receive this allocation of county resources – regardless of their desire for any municipal services. This curiosity already exists in certain current municipalities, but could become rampant if legislation like HB 1436 were to pass. Along similar lines, state law governing Highway User Revenues would be another artificial inducement to incorporate. This is because state law currently rewards municipal road miles more generously than county road miles (and even more so with the current phase-in of substantially higher municipal road funding passed during the 2022 session), under a heavily distorted allocation, patchworked since the “great recession” cuts over a decade ago. While this financial incentive is not dramatic, it illustrates yet another distortion arising from a wide-open incorporation law.

Both bills remain in the House Environment and Transportation Committee, which has domain over general local government matters. without a final vote.



Conduit Street Podcast: Breaking Ground on MD's New Court-Ordered Treatment Law



On the latest episode of the *Conduit Street Podcast*, Sarah Sample talks with Marie Grant of the Department of Health about the implications of Maryland's new court-ordered mental health treatment law.

Conduit Street Podcast

Breaking Ground on MD's New Court-Ordered Treatment Law



May 17, 2024 Maryland Association of Counties



This week on the Conduit Street Podcast, we delve into Maryland's groundbreaking court-ordered mental health treatment program, making the state the 48th to establish such a program. Joining the podcast is Marie Grant, Assistant Secretary for Health Policy at the Maryland Department of Health, alongside host Sarah Sample, to discuss the implications for Maryland, county governments, and mental health treatment access statewide. Tune in as they explore the bill's journey through the legislative process, the real-world problems it aims to solve, and the intricacies of the court-ordered treatment process.

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News and information for Maryland's counties

Special Edition: 2024 MACo Summer Conference Wrap-Up

Check out the [#MACoCon Twitter feed](#)
for a recap of the 2024 MACo Summer Conference!

The **2024 Summer Conference** marked another monumental engagement opportunity for Maryland's county leaders. With the US and Maryland economies offering mixed signals, counties are now grappling with how to find funding and sustain essential services as a one-time influx of federal funding winds down.

Themed "Turning the Tide," the conference examined the ways counties can, with an eye on the future, foster and fund county priorities.

Covering a wide range of topics, attendees engaged in sessions on infrastructure, land use planning, emergency communications, artificial intelligence, housing, mental health, cybersecurity, workforce challenges, and education. The event featured insights from distinguished speakers and special guests, including U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, doing his last MACoCon Town Hall Forum, Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman, bipartisan legislative leaders from across the state, and Governor Wes Moore. Please view the entire [Program of Events](#) online.



From bustling exhibitor booths offering innovative solutions to engaging discussions, the conference buzzed with opportunities for knowledge exchange and networking. The Taste of Maryland Reception highlighted county tourism and economic development efforts, while the highly anticipated Friday Crab Feast cemented its reputation as the networking event of the year.

As the curtain falls on this year's event, the excitement is already building for the next chapter. **Save the dates - August 12-16, 2025** - for another enriching Summer Conference filled with education, partnership-building, and insightful policy discussions.

Don't Miss MACo's Winter Conference!
Dec 11-13, 2024, at the Hyatt in Cambridge, MD

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