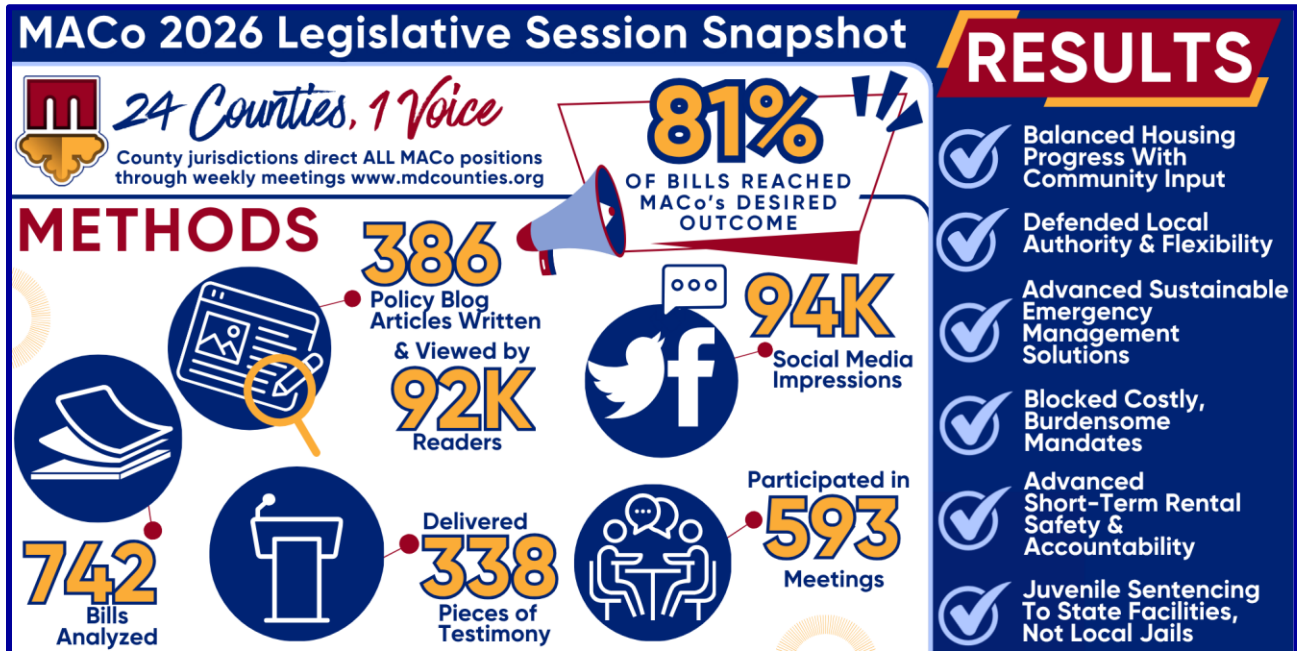


Maryland Association of Counties (MACo)

The Honorable MC Keegan-Ayer, Frederick County Council Member and 2026 MACo President
 Michael Sanderson, MACo Executive Director



Some Good Outcomes	Some Hard-Fought Compromises	Some Lingering Issues
<p>Focus on housing yields workable bills, after compromises – avoids most “intrusive” ideas</p>	<p>Multiple suggestions to shift costs to counties rejected, but threat still looming in tight times</p>	<p>State’s fiscal situation looms as massive central issue for 2027 session... Structural problems</p>
<p>State adopted smart plan to properly house incarcerated juveniles, keep them out of local jails</p>	<p>Amidst energy debate, mandated rooftop solar process softened, and funding still required</p>	<p>Blueprint education plan roll-out continues, with evaluation late this year and fiscal pressures up</p>
<p>Defeated <u>multiple</u> costly mandates and burdens on counties as employers, lawsuit defendants, and service providers – as always</p>	<p>Aggressive mandate for Assisted Outpatient Treatment removed, but multi-year phase-in will pressure counties a lot in the coming years</p>	<p>Compromise plan for supporting incarcerated individuals’ treatment stalled (again) but stakeholders aligned behind one good option</p>

Officers and Executive Committee:



MC Keegan-Ayer

President, MACo
Council Member
Frederick County



Lenny Pfeffer

First Vice President, MACo
Council President
Dorchester County



Paul Edwards

Second Vice President, MACo
Chair, Board of
Commissioners
Garrett County



Steuart Pittman

Secretary, MACo
County Executive
Anne Arundel County



Craig Mathies

Treasurer, MACo
Commissioner
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Jack Wilson

Past President, MACo
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 County Executive
 Howard County



Marc Elrich
 County Executive
 Montgomery County



Aisha Braveboy
 County Executive
 Prince George's County



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



John Barr
 Commissioner President
 Washington County



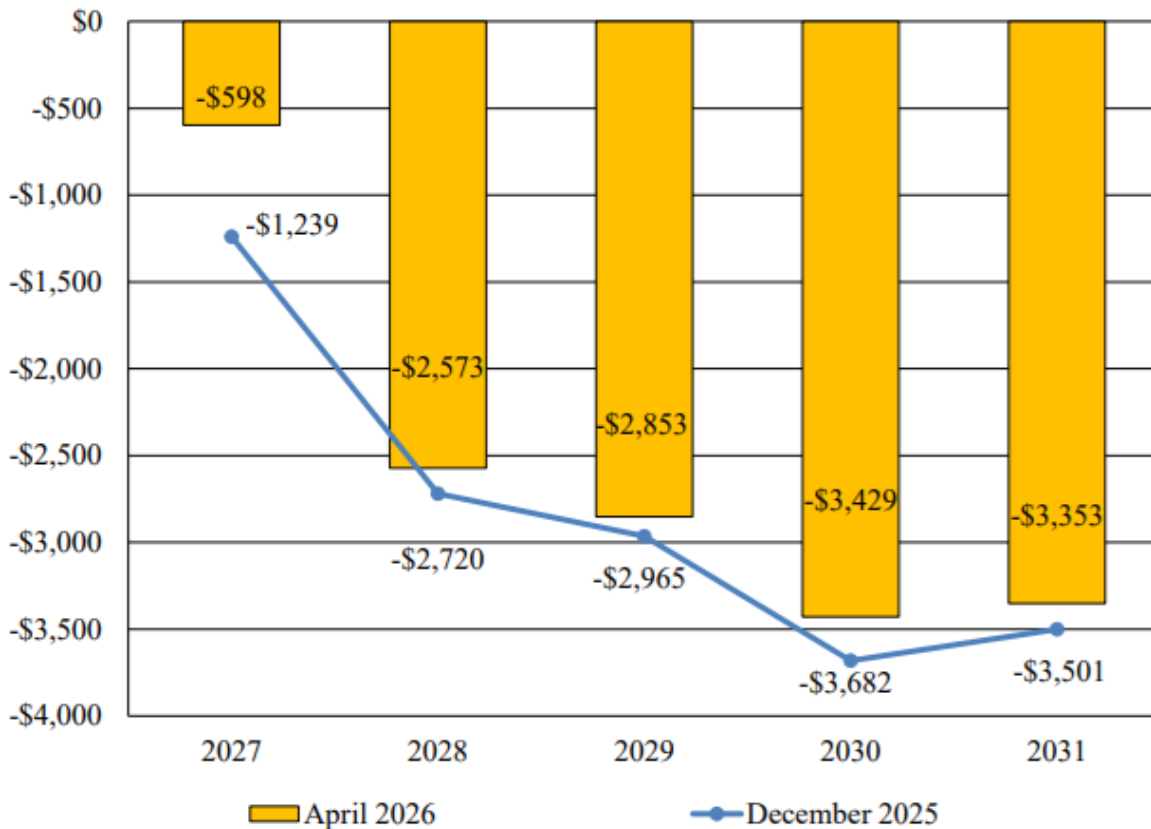
Chip Bertino
 Commissioner
 Worcester County



Julie Giordano
 County Executive
 Wicomico County

The Legislative Crystal Ball: Looking Ahead at the State's Fiscal Picture

**Exhibit A-1.7
General Fund Structural Budget Outlook
Fiscal 2027-2031
(\$ in Millions)**



Source: Department of Legislative Services

Exhibit A-1.8 shows further detail regarding the general fund budget outlook. Following the General Assembly's actions, fiscal 2027 is projected to end with a general fund balance of \$201 million. Between fiscal 2027 and 2031, ongoing spending is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 5.6%, outpacing ongoing revenues, which are estimated to grow at an average annual rate of 3.5%. The structural gap grows substantially beginning in fiscal 2028 as the Blueprint costs exceed the available Blueprint revenues and nearly \$2.6 billion of general funds are required to close the overall structural gap.

from The 90 Day Report, published April 2026 by the Department of Legislative Services



[2026 End of Session Wrap-Up:](#) [Housing and Community Development](#)

[Dominic Butchko](#) | April 15, 2026 | [County News](#) / [Housing and Community Development](#) / [MACo Testimony](#)

The segments below provide a brief overview of MACo's work on housing and community development policy in the 2026 General Assembly session.

Counties are on the front lines of Maryland's housing challenges—working to expand affordability, revitalize communities, and respond to persistent issues like vacancy, blight, and displacement. Through its advocacy, MACo supports policies that strengthen local capacity to deliver housing solutions, invest in community development, and address the full continuum of housing needs.

In the 448th legislative session, housing remained a central focus, shaped by ongoing affordability pressures, supply constraints, and growing demand for state intervention. The General Assembly advanced a wide range of proposals from production incentives and tenant protections to tools aimed at revitalizing distressed properties, many of which rely on counties for implementation and oversight.

Amid these evolving priorities, MACo worked to ensure that new policies are both actionable and responsive to local conditions. MACo's legislative committee guided the association's positions on hundreds of bills, helping to refine legislation, promote flexible tools, and reinforce the essential role counties play in turning housing policy into meaningful, on-the-ground results.

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



MACo supported HB 85/SB 511 – Corporations and Associations – Cooperative Limited Equity Housing Corporations – Establishment with amendments. This bill establishes a process for converting certain entities into Cooperative Limited Equity Housing Corporations (CLEHCs). MACo's amendments aligned local authority over CLEHCs with the existing framework that governs condominium regimes to promote long-term affordability. **This bill DID pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 153/SB 12 – Residential Rental Apartments – Air-Conditioning Requirement with amendments. This bill will establish state minimum air conditioning requirements for apartment buildings of 10 units or greater. MACo’s amendment preserved counties’ ability to set stronger standards than the State. **This bill DID pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 548/SB 325 – Land Use – Permitting – Development Rights (Maryland Housing Certainty Act) with amendments. This bill would have overturned existing Maryland case law by establishing an earlier vesting standard for residential projects and adjusting impact fee and excise tax payment timing to the issuance of a use and occupancy permit. MACo’s amendments moved the legislation in a more workable, predictable, and fiscally responsible direction. **This bill DID pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo opposed HB 1538 – Land Use – Accessory Dwelling Units – Requirements and Prohibitions (Maryland Generational Housing Act of 2026). This bill would have required local governments to allow both an internal and external accessory dwelling unit on single-family lots regardless of density limits. Additionally, it would have restricted new parking requirements and allowed ADUs to share utility meters and lines with the main house. HB 1538 would have effectively tripled the density allowed in any area zoned for single-family zoning. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo opposed HB 778 – Land Use – Middle Housing Options – Requirements. This bill would have imposed a sweeping, one-size-fits-all zoning mandate that limited local planning discretion, created implementation uncertainty, and risked unintended fiscal, infrastructure, and public safety consequences by effectively eliminating single-family zoning. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported SB 267 – Land Use – Residential Housing – Oversight and Approval (Building Affordably in My Back Yard Act). BAMBY is a comprehensive, locally grounded package that would have advanced a balanced housing strategy by empowering counties to speed housing production, deploy practical market tools, align state actions with local realities, and pair growth with sensible renter protections. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 239/SB 36 – Land Use – Zoning – Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026) with amendments. This bill would have made several sweeping changes to the land use article and zoning authority, effectively increasing density in single family zones. As key implementers of land use policy, counties offered amendments to refine the bill, ensuring its smooth administration, and reducing operational and fiscal risks for communities. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo submitted a letter of information on HB 993/SB 666 – Real Property – Short-Term Rentals to offer guardrails that allow limited tenant participation in the short-term rental economy while preserving local land use authority and protecting the supply of attainable housing. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo submitted a letter of information on HB 691 – State Government – Procedures – Permitting Efficiency for Housing Development Projects. The bill would have allowed state departments to review and analyze housing-related permitting processes and to implement streamlining measures intended to speed up reviews. MACo’s letter emphasized the importance of ensuring that any delegated responsibilities are clearly defined, adequately funded, and structured to avoid unintended cost shifts to local governments. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 402/SB 981 – Common Ownership Communities – Oversight, Governing Document Database, and Local Commissions with amendments. This bill would have established the Common Ownership Community Oversight Division within the Department of Housing and Community Development to oversee common ownership communities, handle complaints, collect and publish community governance documents, and set standards for local oversight commissions. As drafted, HB 402 would have preempted local existing Common Ownership Community Commissions. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 1501 –Department of Housing and Community Development – Homeless Shelter Certification with amendments. This bill would have granted DHCD broad authority to regulate homeless shelters. To preserve established emergency response practices while advancing the bill’s broader goals, counties requested targeted amendments to exempt emergency disaster shelters from the proposed licensing requirements. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 1188 – Excess Ownership of Single-Family Residences Excise Tax (End Hedge Fund Control of Maryland Homes Act of 2026). This bill sought to establish commonsense guardrails on large hedge funds from purchasing a disproportionate amount of any county’s housing supply. This bill would have addressed housing affordability challenges by targeting high-volume acquisitions by large investment firms which contribute to rising housing costs and reduced availability for homebuyers. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 774/SB 462 – Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction). The bill would have authorized counties to establish laws preventing landlords from failing to renew or terminating leases without just cause. This measure would have helped counties protect vulnerable residents and tailor solutions to the unique needs of their communities. **This bill DID NOT pass the 2026 legislative session.**

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

[More information on housing and community development-related legislation tracked by MACo during the 2026 legislative session.](#)



2026 End of Session Wrap-Up: Government Liability & Public Information

[Sarah Sample](#) | April 15, 2026 | [Government Liability and Courts](#) / [MACo Testimony](#) / [Public Information and Ethics](#)

The segments below provide a brief overview of MACo's work in the area of government liability and public information in the 2026 General Assembly session.

Local governments operate at the intersection of transparency, accountability, and legal responsibility. Counties are charged with managing public information, upholding ethical standards, and navigating legal risks across a wide range of functions. From responding to public records requests to defending against liability claims, counties must balance open government requirements with privacy protections and the prudent use of taxpayer resources. Through its advocacy, MACo works to promote policies that support transparency and ethical governance while ensuring fair and sustainable standards for public-sector liability.

In Maryland's 448th legislative session, the General Assembly considered a wide range of proposals in this space reflecting growing attention to government transparency, data access, and the legal frameworks governing public entities. MACo's legislative committee guided the association's position on measures affecting public information practices, litigation standards, and liability exposure with direct implications for how counties manage risk, respond to public requests, and carry out their responsibilities as employers and service providers.

Here, MACo worked to ensure that policies strike an appropriate balance between public access and operational practicality, while also safeguarding counties from undue legal and financial burdens.

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



MACo opposed HB 466 – Civil Actions – Motor Vehicle Accidents Involving Vulnerable Individuals – Comparative Negligence. The bill would have created a new comparative fault standard in Maryland and upended the state's well-established and carefully balanced contributory negligence standard, without any corresponding adjustments to other components of Maryland's longstanding balanced approach to tort claims. **This bill did not pass the 2026 session.**

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



MACo opposed HB 526 – Civil Actions – Settlement Agreements – Payment and Release. This bill would have required the settling defendant in a tort action for money damages to provide a proposed release to a plaintiff within 10 days and to pay all sums due to a plaintiff under a settlement agreement within 15 days. This would have imposed strict new deadlines on local governments to finalize settlement releases and issue payments in tort actions. Although the bill was successfully amended to exempt county governments **it did not pass the 2026 session.**

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



MACo supported HB 332/SB 346 – Civil Actions – Violation of Constitutional Rights (No Kings Act) with amendments. This bill would have established a path toward granting attorney's fees in any case asserting a State constitutional claim, likely leading to an increase in litigation and costs for the State and local governments at the taxpayer's expense. As amended, MACo took no position on SB 346. While **this bill did not pass the 2026 session**, HB 351 carried the amended provisions and passed.

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



MACo supported HB 631 – Criminal Law – Threats Against State or Local Official – Penalties. This bill would have strengthened the penalties for threats against local elected officials. These changes sought to deter harmful actions that both endanger public servants and discourage public participation in leadership roles. **This bill did not pass in the 2026 session.**

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



MACo opposed HB 1536 – Maryland Enforcement Limits and Transparency (MELT) Act. This bill would have altered how county employees, private contractors, and various members of the public interact with federal agents and agencies attempting to knowingly comply with immigration and customs enforcement. MACo warned that this could expose local governments to legal and financial liability for actions taken by sheriffs and deputies—state officials who operate independently of county control. **This bill did not pass in the 2026 session.**

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



MACo supported HB 256/SB 487 – Motor Vehicles – Speed Monitoring Systems – Safety Corridors (Vulnerable Road User Protection Act of 2026). It authorizes the State Highway Administration (SHA) to establish a "Safety Corridor" program aimed at reducing serious injuries and fatalities among vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and individuals using mobility devices in segments of highways identified as high risk. This extension of automated enforcement includes an authorization for county governments. **This bill did pass in the 2026 session.**

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



MACo supported HB 1105/SB 979 – Statute of Limitations – Civil Suits to Enforce 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 would have been a practical step to strengthen local enforcement efforts and help ensure consumers have meaningful protections at the community level. **This bill did not pass in the 2026 session.**

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



MACo supported HB 1522/SB 921 – Traffic Control Signal Monitoring and Speed Monitoring Systems – Exemptions From Liability – Vehicle Rental Companies. This bill would have repealed the exemptions for a vehicle rental or leasing company from liability for citations issued by a red-light camera or speed monitoring system in Maryland, representing an enhancement to public safety by all motorists being subject to enforcement, rather than certain groups being openly exempted. **This bill did not pass in the 2026 session.**

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



MACo supported HB 249/SB 173 – Vehicle Laws – Automated Enforcement – Reciprocal Agreements, Arrangements, and Declarations. This bill would have authorized the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administrator to establish reciprocal agreements with other jurisdictions for the enforcement of certain traffic safety violations. This establishes a practical tool to improve roadway safety by setting a new standard for safety and accountability throughout the region. **While this bill did not pass in the 2026 session, the provisions were amended on to SB 111 which passed.**

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



MACo supported HB 55/SB 45 – Vehicle Laws – Speed Monitoring Systems – Residential Districts. This bill would have authorized statewide use of speed monitoring devices in residential districts under certain circumstances and only when enabled by a local ordinance. These changes could have helped promote safety and deter aggressive, reckless, and negligent driving, particularly in areas with families and children. **This bill did not pass in the 2026 session.**

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

[For more government liability and public information-related legislation tracked by MACo during the 2026 legislative session.](#)



[2026 End of Session Wrap-Up:](#) [Intergovernmental Relations](#)

[Michael Sanderson](#) | April 16, 2026 | [County News](#) / [Intergovernmental Relations](#) / [MACo Testimony](#)

The segments below provide a brief overview of MACo's work on intergovernmental relations policy in the 2026 General Assembly session.

Counties serve as the boots-on-the-ground public service providers to nearly all Maryland residents. From public safety and infrastructure to health, energy, and governance, this role requires strong coordination and clear communication between all levels of government. Through its intergovernmental relations advocacy, MACo works to strengthen the state-local partnership, ensuring that county voices are heard and respected in the policymaking process.

In Maryland's 448th legislative session, intergovernmental dynamics were shaped by fiscal pressures, evolving policy priorities, and ongoing discussions around the appropriate balance of state authority and local control. The General Assembly considered a wide range of proposals that would affect how counties implement programs, manage resources, and engage with state agencies, often with significant operational and financial implications. An interesting twist for the 2026 session was the creation of the House of Delegates' new standing committee on Government, Labor, and Elections — with new leadership and a roster of members, many of whom were exposed to these structure-of-government matters for the first time.

Within this environment, MACo engaged to promote collaboration, transparency, and mutual accountability across all levels of government. MACo's legislative committee guided the association's positions to ensure that policies are developed with local input, implemented with clarity, and supported with the resources necessary for success.

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



MACo opposed HB 190 – Constitutional Amendment – Form of County Government – Requirement to Adopt Charter Home Rule. This bill would have repealed Maryland's historic reliance on self-determination by county residents and instead mandated that every county conforms to a single governance structure – a full two-branch charter government. MACo argued that decisions about local governance belong to the voters directly affected — not to a statewide majority that may override the clearly expressed preferences of individual counties' voters or representatives. **This bill DID NOT pass in the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo opposed HB 165 – Courts – Sheriffs’ Salaries – Alterations. This bill would have altered the annual salary of Sheriffs in many counties to equal that of the county’s State’s Attorney, replacing a locally-driven legislative collaboration to properly set salaries for most county sheriffs with a uniform process pinning that salary to that of the county’s state’s attorney. MACo testimony noted the varied roles of sheriffs across counties, even beyond the primary law enforcement role. **This bill DID NOT pass in the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo opposed HB 1411 – Data Center Planning and Transparency Act. This bill would have required large-scale data center operators to report their environmental and resource impacts to certain State and local agencies and would have mandated that each jurisdiction with over 10,000 residents create formal plans for managing these facilities by 2027. In doing so, it would have established a costly statewide approach to addressing data centers that would have undercut local land use authority, imposed an unfunded planning mandate, and duplicated work already underway in many jurisdictions. **This bill DID NOT pass in the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo opposed HB 99 – Municipalities – Annexed Land – Land Use and Density. This bill would have effectively eliminated the longstanding transition period before a municipality is enabled to change the underlying zoning, following an annexation of previously unincorporated areas. This potential path to rapid-fire zoning change could have overwhelmed county infrastructure and school planning. **This bill DID NOT pass in the 2026 legislative session.**

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



MACo supported HB 1063/SB 643 – Natural Resources – Hunting – Management with amendments. This bill would have updated Maryland’s hunting laws and wildlife management practices, with a focus on deer population control by authorizing the Department of Natural Resources to address deer-related impacts in certain areas. and expanding allowable hunting times and opportunities during designated seasons. Late-session refinements, incorporating the views of MACo, local leaders, and other stakeholders eventually yielded a compromise in the session’s waning hours. **This bill passed in the lats stages of the 2026 legislative session, and is staged to become law upon its signing in the weeks ahead.**

[Bill Information](#)

[For more on intergovernmental affairs-related legislation tracked by MACo during the 2026 legislative session.](#)



[It's Time To Register for Summer #MACoCon](#)

[Virginia White](#) | April 23, 2026 | [Summer Conference](#)

MACo's 2026 Summer Conference, "Build What's Next," will be held on August 12-15 in Ocean City, MD. Attendee registration is now open!

[MACo's Summer Conference](#) brings together approximately 3,000 leaders from all levels of government and the private sector. With four days of educational sessions, along with 2 exhibit shows (over 350 vendors!), and numerous briefings, meetings, and opportunities to connect with counties, this conference is a can't-miss event for anyone involved in Maryland's local government interests.



Attendee registration is now open

(exhibitor registration is coming soon!).

- [View the Preliminary Schedule](#)
- [View the Attendee Registration Rates](#)

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- [Log into Engagifii](#)
- Go to Events/All Events – select Register next to the Summer Conference Attendee event
- Payment is due at time of registration, so please have your credit card ready!

NOTE: [MACo Corporate Partners](#) – please contact Reginabz@mdcounties.org to register!



The **MACo Pooled OPEB Investment Trust Fund** is a vehicle designed to help local governments invest current funds toward future obligations for retiree health insurance, a.k.a. “other post-employment benefits.” Recent accounting rule changes have highlighted these liabilities on government balance sheets, and many counties are amidst plans to save toward these future costs.

<p>Why a Trust?</p>	<p>Investing through the MACo Pooled OPEB Trust offers governments an opportunity under state law to invest funds in a manner suitable for longer-term assets, and outside the laws generally governing “public funds.” The Trust arrangement ensures that the funds may not be extracted for purposes other than the intended benefits.</p>
<p>Who Can Join?</p>	<p>Both county and municipal governments, and other county-funded entities are welcome to join the MACo OPEB Trust. Whether you have one-time funds to put toward OPEB costs, or are funding annual contributions, the Trust can put your investment to work for your jurisdiction. There is no minimum deposit to join the Trust and establish an account. Funds may be withdrawn at any time.</p>
<p>What is The Trust’s Investment Policy?</p>	<p>Overall, the Trustees have adopted a fairly conservative mixed portfolio, with 65% in equities and 35% in fixed income investments. The target rate of return for the Trust is 7% annually, set generally in keeping with industry trends given the diversified portfolio construction. Members may continue to use their own return assumption embedded in local plan valuations. The trust is currently migrating into active investments using a dollar cost averaging method, with some allocations still in cash during that transition.</p>
<p>Why Pool Together?</p>	<p>Pooling assets together have multiple potential benefits for participating governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this is a “ready to go” option for a government who doesn’t have a Trust established • sharing legal and administrative overhead costs reduces each participant’s share • pooling assets gain opportunities for lower fees for investment advisors • greater pooled assets gain access to stronger investment options
<p>Trust Advisors:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Davenport & Company – offering Trust management and administrative services • McGuire Woods – offering legal services to the Trust and its members • Boomershine Consulting – actuarial services to the Trust and its members • Wilmington Trust – custodial and reporting services • GYL Financial Synergies – investment consultant to the Trust • Clifton Larson Allen – independent auditors
<p>Where Can I Find More Information?</p>	<p>Contact MACo Executive Director (and ex-officio Trustee) Michael Sanderson at 410.269.0043 or msanderson@mdcounties.org with any inquiries. Read more online at: https://www.mdcounties.org/250/OPEB-Trust</p>



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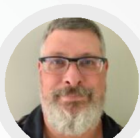
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