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**BILL NO.:** Senate Bill 956

**TITLE:** Criminal Law – Threats to Public Officials

**SPONSOR:** Senator Watson

**COMMITTEE:** Judicial Proceedings

**POSITION:** **SUPPORT**

**DATE:** March 16, 2022

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 956 – Criminal Law – Threats to Public Officials. This legislation would provide health officers, election administrators, and public employees who are responsible for inspecting and enforcing housing and building codes and standards with further protection from threats made against them.

Threats against public officials have recently risen sharply both in number and in severity, putting their ability to perform their duties safely at risk. Threats made by the public discourage individuals from taking public positions, disrupt government operations, and pose a risk to the health and safety of Maryland’s public employees. Residents throughout the State rely on public officials to coordinate health responses in times of emergency, ensure compliance with state and local code, and carry out the day-to-day government operations that keep services running efficiently. Enhanced legal protections for public officials ensure that the critical services they provide continue uninterrupted and those who disturb their wellbeing are met with appropriate consequences.

Senate Bill 956 adds health officers, election administrators, and certain public employees to the list of already protected public officials. This bill imposes severe penalties on violations, providing up to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$2,500 on individuals who threaten specified public officials. Senate Bill 956 will keep essential public professionals safe in a time when their services could not be more vital.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 956. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at [jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov).