

***SB 298 - Department of General Services - Maryland Capitol Police - Statewide Jurisdiction***

**Position:** Support

**Committee:** Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

**Date:** February 5, 2026

**From:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Department of General Services (DGS) requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 298. This departmental bill will significantly improve the law enforcement capabilities of the Maryland Capitol Police (MCP) by granting statewide jurisdiction for MCP law enforcement activities and expanding MCP's responsibility for the security of state-owned and leased properties.

This legislation will ensure that all MCP officers are fully authorized to enforce Maryland's criminal laws statewide. This scope of authority is essential to allowing MCP to fully engage in all aspects of law enforcement related to their roles as sworn law enforcement officers. Routine police functions, such as investigations, arrests, serving warrants and summonses, and welfare checks, are unduly impeded under current law. SB 298 fills a critical gap in MCP's ability to provide professional law enforcement services to benefit all Marylanders statewide.

SB 298 will significantly enhance MCP's role in partnering with other state and local law enforcement agencies. All Maryland law enforcement agencies face ongoing staffing challenges. Granting MCP statewide jurisdiction will enable MCP to function as a force multiplier, providing direct assistance during demonstrations, investigations, and major events involving state assets, thereby reducing strain on local and county agencies.

The public safety and law enforcement functions of MCP are inherently statewide in scope. Threats to government operations, facilities, and personnel do not respect jurisdictional boundaries. Without statewide authority, MCP is often forced to rely on jurisdictional handoffs, lacking the power to conduct follow-up investigations, act on credible intelligence, and execute enforcement actions. In these ways, the lack of statewide authority creates an unnecessarily fragmented threat response, jeopardizing the safety of state employees and Maryland citizens.

By providing statewide jurisdiction, SB 298 would allow MCP to more seamlessly contribute its professional law enforcement personnel and resources to expand the scope of public safety and security services benefiting all Marylanders. All MCP officers meet Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission requirements. MCP maintains advanced capabilities, including crisis intervention, crisis negotiation, emergency response, active assailant response, full-service K-9 teams, body-worn cameras, mobile data terminals, a centralized dispatch center with statewide camera access, and a dedicated internal affairs function. As a highly trained, professional police force, over the past five years, MCP has managed more than 332,853 visitor interactions, conducted over 432,700 patrol and premises checks, and completed nearly 6,300 traffic and enforcement-related actions.

Interagency communication and collaboration are key to successful policing. This legislation includes robust interagency notice provisions, reflecting the need for deliberate collaboration and prompt communication with other State and local law enforcement agencies. SB 298 clarifies that MCP officers' statewide law enforcement activities will be conducted in a manner requiring notice to all other State and local law enforcement agencies. In addition to the law enforcement entities named in the bill, the cross-reference to §1-101 of the Public Safety Article ensures that all state and local law enforcement agencies receive timely notice of MCP actions.

MCP already engages in many cooperative law enforcement operations to assist local law enforcement agencies, such as the Annapolis Police Department and the Baltimore City Police Department, by providing additional officers to fully staff the security needs of large public gatherings and events. In the past five years, MCP has managed 472 demonstrations and rallies in Annapolis and 44 additional demonstrations in Baltimore. In 2025 alone, MCP handled 85 rallies, confirming a sustained upward trend in public order complexity and operational demand. By providing statewide jurisdiction, SB 298 would allow MCP to more seamlessly share resources to ensure that public safety and security services are provided at public events.

Establishing statewide jurisdiction will enhance MCP's authority to engage in the full range of law enforcement activities without the increased risks that can arise when operating outside the department's statutory jurisdiction. SB 298's clarification of authority reduces MCP exposure to personal and State liability, including potential costs associated with civil litigation, claims, or enforcement actions challenging departmental actions on jurisdictional grounds. Clearly establishing statewide jurisdiction and enhancing interagency notice requirements are risk-reducing facets of SB 298 that represent a potential long-term fiscal benefit to the State.

This legislation repeals outdated provisions of statute governing the roles and responsibilities of MCP at specific locations, including the State Center in Baltimore City, and the Annapolis State House and Legislative and Executive complex. Today, MCP is responsible for public safety and security across an array of widely dispersed state-owned and leased properties.

SB 298 updates the law by expanding the perimeter of safety and security surrounding these properties from 1,000 to 2,000 feet. MCP is seeking this update to facilitate the seamless operation of routine law enforcement not only on premises but also in the broader vicinity of state properties. SB 298 is necessary to meet the evolving security demands of Maryland's government, protect state employees and Maryland citizens wherever state business occurs, and ensure continuity of government operations in an increasingly complex threat environment.

The areas surrounding state offices are often in urban settings with high volumes of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. In Baltimore City and Annapolis, for example, the increased perimeter will improve MCP's ability to monitor and take action, in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies, when persons of interest or threats of violence are in the vicinity of state offices. Increasing the perimeters will benefit joint operations for public events and joint training exercises, as well as the updating of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between MCP and the Annapolis and Baltimore City Police Departments. Safety and security of state operations and services are critical for our dedicated state personnel and the communities where state facilities are located.

For these reasons, DGS urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 298.