

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2024 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 944  
Economic Matters

(Delegate Griffith)

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**Cecil County and Harford County - Outdoor Seating at Restaurants, Breweries,  
and Bars**

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This bill prohibits Cecil and Harford counties from imposing or enforcing a local law that restricts outdoor seating at a restaurant, brewery, or bar during their hours of operation. The bill specifies that outdoor seating in restaurants, breweries, or bars must comply with (1) all applicable federal, State, or local fire codes; (2) the federal Americans with Disabilities Act; and (3) all applicable State or local health and safety laws. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** The bill would not materially affect the operations or finances of Cecil or Harford counties.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Cecil and Harford counties are both charter counties. Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the Local Government Article describes the express powers granted to charter counties under Article XI-A, § 2 of the Maryland Constitution. The Express Powers Act grants powers to charter counties to legislate and administer over local affairs. Generally, a charter county may enact, repeal, or amend any local law within the scope of the express powers given. A charter county may also pass any ordinance, resolution, or bylaw that *does not*

*conflict* with public general law, provided that the overall health, safety, good government, and general welfare of the local community are maintained.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Cecil and Harford counties; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 15, 2024  
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