

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 532 (Delegate Barnes)
Environment and Transportation

Local Government - Municipal Annexation - Petition and Referendum

This emergency bill allows a redevelopment authority in a charter county meeting certain requirements to be considered a person for the purposes of voting in, or signing a petition relating to, municipal annexation or a referendum on municipal annexation.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: For a redevelopment authority in a charter county to be considered a *person* as it relates to signing a petition and voting in a referendum on a municipal annexation resolution put forward by the residents of an area to be annexed, as specified, the redevelopment authority must have been created by statute, own property that has received capital funds from the State for redevelopment, and entered into a contract, after a competitive solicitation, with a for-profit entity for the redevelopment of the property.

Current Law: A municipality may enlarge its boundaries by annexation of land, subject to various criteria and procedures established in Title 4, Subtitle 4 of the Local Government Article, including adoption of an annexation plan (a plan for providing municipal services to the annexed area) and enactment of an annexation resolution.

An annexation proposal may be initiated by the legislative body of the municipality or by petition.

If fewer than 20 residents in an area to be annexed are eligible to sign a petition for annexation and vote in a referendum, any *person*, including the two or more joint owners of jointly owned property, who owns real property in the area to be annexed may sign the petition and vote in the referendum.

Municipal Annexation by Petition

Generally, a petition for municipal annexation must be signed by at least 25% of the registered voters who are residents of the area to be annexed and the owners of at least 25% of the assessed valuation of the real property in the area to be annexed. After verifying compliance with all specified requirements, the presiding officer must promptly cause a resolution proposing the change of boundaries as requested in the petition to be introduced in the legislative body.

After holding a public hearing, the legislative body of a municipality may enact an annexation resolution in accordance with its normal legislative procedure. The resolution may not take effect until at least 45 days after its enactment.

At any time within 45 days after the enactment of an annexation resolution, a petition for referendum on the resolution may be made, as specified, by residents of the area to be annexed, qualified voters of the municipality, or the county governing body. The chief executive and administrative officer must suspend the effectiveness of the annexation resolution pending the results of the referendum which must be held between 15 and 90 days after notices of the referendum are published.

The Prince George's County Redevelopment Authority

The Prince George's County Redevelopment Authority was established by local legislation in 1997 as a body corporate and politic and an instrumentality of Prince George's County. The authority may appoint certain core staff, such as an executive director, with the consent of the county executive and may also appoint and remove other employees or agents as the authority deems necessary or desirable. Among other express powers related to economic development, the authority may (1) acquire, purchase, or otherwise obtain, hold, and use any property, or any interest therein; (2) accept grants from, make loans to, and enter into contracts with any federal, State, or local agency, or any private entity or party; (3) establish, impose, and collect tolls, rates, rentals, fees, and charges relating to its undertakings and property; and (4) subject to specified requirements, issue bonds.

Additional Comments: The Prince George’s County Redevelopment Authority is currently suing the town of Bladensburg over the town’s attempt to annex land currently owned by the authority. Without action, the annexation process will be completed on February 2, 2025. Under the bill, the redevelopment authority would qualify as a person for purposes of signing a petition and voting in a referendum on a municipal annexation resolution.

Additionally, the Town of Cheverly is suing the Town of Bladensburg over Bladensburg’s annexation of the same site.

The Maryland Association of Counties advises that Baltimore and Prince George’s counties are currently the only two charter counties in the State that have redevelopment authorities potentially affected by the bill. The Department of Legislative Services is unaware of any pending litigation involving the redevelopment authority in Baltimore County that would be affected by the bill.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 505 (Senator Zucker) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Baltimore, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Wicomico counties; Maryland Association of Counties; cities of Annapolis, Bowie, and Takoma Park; Maryland Municipal League; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Kayvon Samadani

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510