

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 600 (St. Mary's County Delegation)
Government, Labor, and Elections

St. Mary's County - Metropolitan Commission

This bill makes several changes to the Public Local Laws of St. Mary's County. The bill alters the fines and administrative enforcement actions that the county and the St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission (MetCom) may impose for certain misdemeanors, civil infractions, and other violations of MetCom rules and regulations, as specified. The bill increases, from \$25,000 to \$250,000, the minimum amount of the bond that the Treasurer or any Deputy Treasurer appointed by MetCom must give to the State, MetCom, and the county commissioners. Finally, the bill authorizes, rather than requires, MetCom to cause studies, plans, and estimates to be made for new facilities in portions of the county designated as not planned for service by the county comprehensive water and sewerage plan.

Fiscal Summary

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

Local Effect: St. Mary's County and MetCom revenues may increase, beginning in FY 2027, to the extent higher fines or penalties are imposed for certain misdemeanors or civil infractions. St. Mary's County and MetCom expenditures are not materially affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Penalty Provisions

The bill increases, from \$100 to \$1,000, the maximum fine that can be levied against an individual who is convicted of violating the following sections of the Public Local Laws of St. Mary's County:

- section 113-7 (Levy of Taxes);
- section 113-11 (Permits and Regulations of Use);
- section 113-17 (Privately Constructed Systems);
- section 113-19 (Entry Into Buildings); and
- section 113-20 (Obstructions).

Further, the bill authorizes MetCom to impose the following schedule of fines in the case of certain civil infractions:

- \$250 for the first violation;
- \$500 for the second violation;
- \$750 for the third violation; and
- \$1,000 for the fourth or any subsequent violations.

Each day that a violation continues is a separate civil infraction subject to an additional citation and fine of \$250.

The bill authorizes MetCom to impose a maximum fine of \$1,000 the first time an individual removes water from a public system without authorization under MetCom jurisdiction and a maximum fine of \$2,000 for any additional violations.

The bill authorizes MetCom to use any combination of administrative enforcement remedies authorized in current law to address violations of any rules or regulations adopted by MetCom concerning public water and sewer use, including lines and mains, all appurtenances, connections, and discharge into the public sewer systems.

Current Law: MetCom, a component unit of St. Mary's County, was established by the General Assembly in 1957 as a quasi-governmental, nonprofit body, to supply water and sewer service to St. Mary's County. MetCom has been providing water and sewer service since 1964.

Penalty Provisions

Any act or omission designated as a misdemeanor in the Public Local Laws of St. Mary's County governing sanitary districts is punishable by a maximum fine of \$100, confinement for no more than 30 days in county jail, or both.

MetCom is authorized to designate any violation of the Sanitary Districts Chapter of the Public Local Laws of St. Mary's County as a civil infraction. With the exception of removing water from a public system under MetCom jurisdiction, MetCom is authorized to impose a maximum fine of \$100 for each violation. MetCom may establish a schedule of fines for each violation and may adopt procedures to collect those fines.

In the case of removing water from a public system under MetCom jurisdiction, MetCom is authorized to impose a maximum fine of \$1,000 for each violation and may establish a fine schedule for each violation, to be based on the amount of water removed and number of violations.

Administrative Enforcement

MetCom may use administrative or judicial enforcement remedies for violations of any rules or regulations adopted by MetCom concerning public water and sewer use, including lines and mains, all appurtenances, connections, and discharge into the public sewer systems. Among other administrative enforcement remedies, MetCom may issue: (1) a notification of a violation; (2) a reimbursement assessment for actual costs (including time and materials); *or* (3) an emergency suspension.

Bonds

The Treasurer and any Deputy Treasurer of MetCom must provide a bond of \$25,000 (or a greater amount that the county commissioners prescribe), to the State, MetCom, and the county commissioners.

Studies, Plans, and Estimates for New Facilities

MetCom is required to conduct studies, plans, and estimates to be made for new facilities in the portions of the county in which MetCom determines that the facilities are necessary and may divide each sanitary district into water and sewerage districts in a manner that, in the judgment of MetCom, best serves the communities needs and promotes convenience and economy of installation and operation.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); St. Mary's County; Department of Legislative Services

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caw/tso

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