

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 517

(Delegate Terrasa, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

**Emission Standards, Ambient Air Quality Standards, and Solid Waste
Management - Local Authority**

The bill makes various changes related to the authority of a political subdivision to adopt ordinances, rules, and regulations that are at least as stringent as standards set by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) in the areas of ambient air quality control and refuse disposal systems and solid waste regulation. The bill also expressly states that a current law requirement for MDE to approve a county water and sewerage plan does not limit (1) a county's contracting authority or (2) a county's authority to set emission standards or ambient air quality standards. Finally, the bill requires MDE, by October 1, 2026, to publish information on its website recognizing the legal authority of political subdivisions to adopt local ordinances, rules, or regulations to ensure clean air and to regulate solid waste management within the jurisdictional boundaries of the political subdivision so long as the local standards are at least as stringent as State and federal standards. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect MDE finances or operations. Although State expenditures may increase for State agencies as permit holders, any such impact cannot be estimated at this time, as discussed in the Additional Comments below. State revenues are likely not affected.

Local Effect: Although local finances may be affected, any such impact cannot be estimated at this time, as discussed below.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful, as discussed in the Additional Comments below.

Analysis

Bill Summary: An ordinance, a rule, or a regulation adopted by a political subdivision pursuant to § 2-104 of the Environment Article may not be construed to be in conflict with a standard set by MDE if (1) the local standard is at least as stringent as the standard set by MDE and (2) it is technically possible for a regulated entity to comply with MDE's standard and the local standard.

The bill also specifies that, except as provided in the bill, Title 9 of the Environment Article (which governs refuse disposal systems and solid waste regulation) does not limit the power of a political subdivision to adopt any ordinance, rule, or regulation to regulate refuse disposal systems or solid waste. However, a political subdivision may not adopt any ordinance, rule, or regulation to regulate refuse disposal systems or solid waste in a manner that is less stringent than the standards set by MDE. An ordinance, rule, or regulation adopted in accordance with the bill's provisions may not be construed to be in conflict with a standard set by MDE if the local standard is at least as stringent as the standard set by MDE.

Current Law:

Powers of Political Subdivisions under Title 2 of the Environment Article

Broadly, Title 2 of the Environment Article, which governs ambient air quality control, does not limit a political subdivision's power to adopt ordinances, rules, or regulations that set emission standards or ambient air quality standards. However, a political subdivision may not adopt any ordinance, rule, or regulation that sets an emission standard or ambient air quality standard that is less stringent than standards set by MDE. Further, the governing body of any political subdivision may ask MDE to adopt rules and regulations that set more restrictive emission standards or ambient air quality standards in that political subdivision.

Federal Clean Air Act and the Maryland Healthy Air Act

The federal Clean Air Act (CAA) is the comprehensive federal law that regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. Among other things, the law authorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to limit levels of "criteria pollutants" to protect public health and public welfare and to regulate emissions of hazardous pollutants.

MDE implements CAA at the State level and (1) has jurisdiction over emissions into the air and ambient air quality in the State; (2) is responsible for monitoring ambient air quality in the State; and (3) must coordinate all State agency programs on ambient air quality control. Maryland's Air Quality Planning Program writes State Implementation Plans and

regulations to reduce emissions and achieve the NAAQS for six criteria air pollutants: ground-level ozone; particulate matter; lead; carbon monoxide; nitrogen dioxide; and sulfur dioxide.

Solid Waste Infrastructure in the State, Generally

The solid waste infrastructure in Maryland consists of both permitted and nonpermitted facilities, and solid waste is managed through a combination of recycling, composting, landfilling, incineration, storage, and exporting for disposal or recycling.

County Water and Sewerage Plans

Each county (including Baltimore City) must have an individual or group (with adjoining counties) plan that is approved by MDE that has a 10-year forecasted water and sewerage plan to demonstrate how safe and adequate water and sewerage facilities will be provided to support planned redevelopment and new growth that is outlined in their comprehensive land use plans.

Local Fiscal Effect: If a political subdivision chooses to adopt, implement, and enforce a local ordinance, rule, or regulation in response to the bill, local finances may be affected. The Department of Legislative Services does not have any information about how many local jurisdictions may be interested in taking such action or the extent to which any future local ordinances, rules, or regulations might affect local finances.

For a discussion of the potential impacts on local governments as permit holders, see the Additional Comments section below.

Additional Comments (Effect on the Regulated Community): To the extent that the bill results in additional, more stringent standards being set at the local level, the bill may result in increased costs for the regulated community (facilities regulated under the State's ambient air quality provisions and the State's refuse disposal systems and solid waste provisions). Affected entities could include State agencies, local governments, and small businesses. Since any additional ordinances, rules, or regulations must be at least as stringent as State and federal standards, they are likely to result in additional compliance costs – and potentially additional permitting costs – for regulated entities. However, any actual impacts depend on whether and to what extent political subdivisions adopt more stringent standards as a result of the bill's changes, which cannot be predicted.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 1058 of 2025 and HB 1088 of 2023.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Calvert, Howard, and Prince George's counties; Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority; City of Annapolis; Maryland Environmental Service; Maryland Department of the Environment; Department of Legislative Services

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