

# **SB544 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Eckardt, Adelaide

Position: FAV

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Budget and Taxation Committee

Health and Human Services  
Subcommittee

*Joint Committees*  
Administrative, Executive,  
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Audit

Children, Youth, and Families

Fair Practices and  
State Personnel Oversight

Pensions

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Testimony for Senate Bill 544  
Charter and Code Home Rule Counties - County Property Leases - Notice Exemptions  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
February 23, 2021

Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 544 - Charter and Code Home Rule Counties - County Property Leases - Notice Exemptions.

As a request from Dorchester County, Senate Bill 544 authorizes charter and home rule counties to enter into a lease that is not renewable and has a term of five years or less, without giving notice. Currently, it is required that a notice shall be published for three successive weeks in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the County.

The County has concerns about the current notice publication process, as it is lengthy and costly. In addition, there are concerns about the potential loss of tenants due to the current process. Dorchester County has stated these types of leases will still be placed on an open session agenda for the Council's review and consideration, giving the public the opportunity to provide comment.

Thank you for your consideration and I respectfully ask for a favorable report of Senate Bill 544.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Addie C. Eckardt".

Senator Addie C. Eckardt

**SB0544-EHE\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jabin, Drew

Position: FAV



## **Senate Bill 544**

*Charter and Code Home Rule Counties - County Property Leases - Notice Exemptions*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs Committee

Date: February 23, 2021

From: Drew Jabin and Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 544. This bill would grant charter and code home rule counties reasonable flexibility to enter into a lease without giving certain notice requirements if the lease is not renewable and has a term of five years or less.

The central tenet of the bill is sound – a short term, non-renewable lease should not trigger the full slate of public transparency requirements as a complete and permanent disposition of publicly owned property.

Under current law, before a charter or code home rule county makes any disposition, grant, or lease of county property, the county must publish notice of the disposition, grant, or lease once a week for 3 successive weeks in at least one newspaper of general circulation. The notice must include the terms and the compensation to be received and give opportunity for objections.

The number of local papers has declined over time, leaving local governments with few options. Some local papers may transition to online-only offerings, leaving a jurisdiction with no printed newspaper in which to publish notices. Further, requiring counties to publish public notices for short-term leases is expensive, time consuming, and inefficient.

This bill provides counties with flexible and optional tools to make short term property decisions, without obliging expensive and cumbersome procedures more suitable for permanent sales. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 544.