



House Bill 1312

COVID-19 Eviction and Housing Relief Act of 2021

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
with AMENDMENTS

To: Judiciary and Environment and Transportation
Committees

Date: February 17, 2021

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1312 **with AMENDMENTS**. The bill's multiple provisions seek to prevent an untoward wave of tenant evictions in the wake of the health pandemic.

MACo's position on this bill is in two parts – recognizing its far reach. Components of the bill supporting local efforts to stem the effects of eviction moratorium may prove to be a productive framework for the use of appropriate federal or state funds, but some implementation responsibilities upon Sheriffs are likely misplaced or unwise.

The Rent Relief Fund envisioned by the bill's new Subtitle 8 is formed to help support local efforts to stem evictions and support rental property owners. Such efforts advance a reasonable policy goal of suspending major economic shocks during an unusually distorted economy, brought about by the health pandemic. Multiple Maryland jurisdictions have launched various programs toward this end, and the bill creates a framework to supplement, and encourage, those local efforts. This general direction is a promising potential use for either state funds, or future federal support to the State of Maryland.

Other implementing components of HB 1312 raise administration and safety concerns, and should be reevaluated.

The bill's broad data collection requirements are placed onto the Sheriff and constables (who carry out evictions) and may oblige a meaningful increase in staff time committed to these ancillary functions. Further, specific parts of the notice provisions may have multiple undesired effects – costly and staff-intensive in their requirements, and potentially creating a more dangerous environment at the scheduled time of eviction for tenants who feel unjustly targeted.

Accordingly, MACo requests the Committee consider elements of HB 1312 as a potential framework for supporting eviction prevention. Multiple notice and reporting requirements, however, should be redirected or re-examined, Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE with AMENDMENTS** report on HB 1312, to craft a more suitable set of next steps to stave off an unwelcome wave of tenant evictions.