



## **House Bill 794**

### *Public Health – Opioid Restitution Fund Advisory Council*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 30, 2022

From: D'Paul Nibber

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 794. This bill would, among other provisions, establish the Opioid Restitution Fund Advisory Council to provide specific findings and recommendations regarding the allocation of money from the Opioid Restitution Fund.

In September of 2021, the State of Maryland entered into landmark settlement agreements amounting to \$395 million with opioids manufacturer Johnson & Johnson and three major opioids distributors, McKesson, AmerisourceBergen, and Cardinal Health. A portion of these settlements will be deposited into the Opioid Restitution Fund, which was established to support opioid abatement programming across the state.

Additional contributions are expected from future settlements with opioids manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. Counties have spent years and countless resources pursuing claims against these actors, forcing their retreat into settlements with the State. Given the indispensable role they have played, counties should have input into how future settlement proceeds are spent. Likewise, MACo requested an amendment to HB 794 proposing several county representatives sit on the Opioid Restitution Fund Advisory Council. A comparable amendment was adopted by the Maryland House of Delegates.

The amended HB 794 will ensure broader representation of opioid abatement stakeholders, contributing to a more equitable division of future settlement proceeds and additional saved lives. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 794 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.