



Senate Bill 419

Opioid Restitution Fund - Appropriation of Settlement Funds

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: February 22, 2022

From: D'Paul Nibber

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 419. This bill would, among other provisions, codify an agreement developed by the Maryland Attorney General and Maryland's political subdivisions regarding the allocation of funds from several opioid medication-related settlements.

In September of 2021, the State of Maryland entered into settlement agreements with opioids manufacturer Johnson & Johnson and three major opioids distributors, McKesson, AmerisourceBergen, and Cardinal Health. The terms of the landmark settlements tied total funds recoverable to county and municipality participation. At Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh's urging, MACo worked alongside the Maryland Municipal League to convene a workgroup charged with creating an equitable division of the settlement funds and encouraging local government participation in the settlements.

The resulting division of funds agreement is the subject of SB 419. As of January of this year, 58 of Maryland's 60 qualifying subdivisions had elected to participate in the agreement. This includes every county in the state, excepting Baltimore City, whose unique challenges rendered them a poor fit for its timetable and provisions. The terms of the agreement reflect substantial hours of good faith negotiations to ensure counties and municipalities have adequate resources to address the worsening opioid epidemic and are not mired in needless "red tape." Ultimately, the funds received by Maryland's counties will be used to save lives through countless needed interventions, including the construction of crisis intervention teams, the hiring of peer recovery specialists, and additional naloxone training and distribution.

This bill will bolster the frontline response to the opioid epidemic provided by Maryland's county officials, resulting in lives saved. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 419 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.