

HB0706-EEE_MACo_SUP.pdf

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House Bill 706

*Economic Development - Sustainable Communities -
Business Facade Improvement Program*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
and Budget and Taxation Committees

Date: March 21, 2023

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 706. This bill would provide resources through the Business Facade Improvement Program, allowing local economic development agencies to direct grants and resources to improve main streets and commercial areas.

In recent decades, certain community areas in Maryland have declined, largely due to economic factors that have seen many blue-collar jobs shift from the United States to other countries. This decline has been further exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many small businesses to close their doors and has altered the workplace dramatically. Main streets and business districts are a driving force in many local economies, so it is critical that these areas remain vibrant centers for commerce and entertainment.

HB 706 would provide a significant tool for jurisdictions looking to direct investment into their business districts. The Business Facade Improvement Program provides counties with grants that they can direct toward certain commercial areas that may have fallen into disrepair or need aesthetic changes.

HB 706 creates a program that enhances local government's ability to keep their main streets and commercial districts looking vibrant and lively, as part of the continued and shared efforts to boost economic development in Maryland. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 706 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_HB0706.pdf

Uploaded by: Joshua Greenberg

Position: FAV



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BILL NO.: **HB 706**

TITLE: Economic Development - Sustainable Communities - Business
Façade Improvement Program

SPONSOR: The Speaker

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: March 21, 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 706 – Economic Development - Sustainable Communities - Business Façade Improvement Program. This legislation would establish the Business Façade Improvement Program.

Like other jurisdictions across the State, Baltimore County seeks to support small businesses and help revitalize older commercial districts. Older commercial spaces and buildings may be functional, but in need of a “facelift” to restore a façade or make exterior improvements. HB 706 would give businesses located within State-designated Sustainable Communities financial support to encourage façade improvements, including things like better signage, exterior lighting, and other exterior improvements. Such improvements can enhance visibility, and drive renewed interest in local businesses within walkable commercial corridors. Reinvigorating such “main street” commercial districts is what the Sustainable Communities program is all about. Visible improvements, like façade enhancements and external lighting can positively impact neighboring properties and the community, spurring additional investments and revitalization.

HB 706 is an investment in the future tax base of our Sustainable Communities that will pay dividends for years to come. More visible businesses are more viable businesses, employing more people, generating more economic activity, and increasing confidence of nearby businesses and residents to make additional investments in their communities.

Counties are well-equipped to administer façade improvement grants that can complement existing business assistance programs. Further, we see this fund as complementary to other programs currently administered by the State’s Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

through their Sustainable Communities Program, including Neighborhood Business Works, Community Legacy, Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative, and National Capital Strategic Economic Development Fund. Baltimore County looks forward to deploying this tool to support stronger businesses in Sustainable Communities.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 706. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

HB 706 -FWA- MML.pdf

Uploaded by: Justin Fiore

Position: FWA



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 21, 2023

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill: HB 706 - Economic Development - Sustainable Communities - Business Facade Improvement Program

Position: Support as Amended

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League supports House Bill 706 as amended to allow municipalities to participate. As introduced, the bill would provide funds only to counties to help businesses within Sustainable Communities improve the outside appearance of their buildings and facilities.

Our members take great pride in the Sustainable Communities program, which is why 93 of the 124 designations (75%) are in municipal boundaries. As the government closer to the people in those communities, our cities and towns would appreciate the opportunity to carry out the sponsor's vision and help restore the facades of businesses in their borders.

As such, the League respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 706 as amended by the House.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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