



Senate Bill 477

Residential Construction or Significant Renovation - Electric Vehicle Charging

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, & Environment
Committee

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From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 477. The bill places strict requirements on the instillation of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure for new and existing housing. While counties fully recognize and support the need to transition to a fully electric transportation infrastructure, counties have several concerns regarding how this legislation would be implemented.

Counties have long been testing policies to require EV charging infrastructure in new and existing housing with limited success. The complicating tradeoff is that requiring the installation of such infrastructure adds significant cost to the production and preservation of affordable housing. Frederick County's own foray into this field offers a possible middle ground solution, as the county currently requires the instillation of inexpensive tubing that can later be used to house much of the EV charging infrastructure. This largely negates the additional significant expenditure, and leaves open a conduit for future instillation. Under SB 477, however, this approach would be insufficient.

The bill raises further considerations around public safety. Private electrical wires, including those obligated under SB 477, are not marked or mapped like public utilities. However, these wires would lay within or beneath the same section of street. It is very possible that public works or private utility employees may need to access these underground utility connections, e.g. a water main break, and inadvertently strike one of these unmarked private electrical lines. Furthermore, there is no requirement for an easily accessible shut-off switch for these lines, so such a scenario could be made even more dangerous. The bill could be strengthened by adding language requiring private electrical lines to be marked and mapped just like public utilities, as well as requiring shut-offs that can be easily accessed by public works or private utility employees – but these considerations add to affordability concerns.

Finally, while counties agree with the spirit of the legislation, there are concerns that this bill may step into areas long seen as the purview of local governments. Maryland's uniquely tailored political system has – appropriately - left specifics regarding building requirements and regulations to the discretion of its counties.

SB 447 mandates a rigid, potentially costly, and conceivably dangerous obligation on home builders, setting aside practical efforts underway locally to accomplish similar goals, creating the surely unintended consequence of making Maryland's affordable housing crisis that much more difficult to overcome. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report for SB 294.