



House Bill 706

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

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: February 23, 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.