



House Bill 900

Occupational Safety and Health - Public Buildings - Indoor Air Quality

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation and
Appropriations Committee

Date: March 9, 2023

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 900. This bill would impose a costly and specific mandate on county governments as part of routine facility maintenance for all public buildings. Ultimately, this bill poses potentially staggering capital costs for counties on what would be duplicative routine facility maintenance that counties are already doing.

Counties prioritize the health and safety of staff and constituents who access the public buildings under their ownership. No jurisdiction wants public schools, county courthouses, or administrative buildings to have less-than-desirable air quality and filtration. Counties do not take issue with the merits of HB 900, but rather the specific means and dictates of the bill.

HB 900 would pose a costly, unfunded mandate for local governments. Under the bill, counties would be required to adhere to new air quality and filtration standards relating to HVAC and other facility systems. This would include all county courts, county jails, public libraries, and other county buildings accessible to the public. Counties would necessarily provide additional financial support to local boards of education, which each own and operate dozens of K-12 school facilities. Not only would this be a daunting operational mandate, but it would also be a costly one.

County governments appropriately manage their own facilities and strive to provide the safest public facilities for the staff they employ and the public they serve. They have managed public facilities and the health and safety within them successfully – and in many cases, have been far ahead of the State’s requirements. The specific mandates of HB 900 are duplicative of routine procedures to which local governments already adhere. Counties are already held to high standards relating to air quality systems, for both new builds and existing facilities.

Furthermore, HB 900 treats all public buildings the same, without any considerations or flexibility for older, historic buildings – a building built in 2020 is treated the same as one built in 1920. This is not practical or reasonable.

While counties appropriately bear the burden of building safety and welcome partnering with the State on these important goals, HB 900 prescribes a duplicative, specific, and expensive approach. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 900 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.