



2023 SESSION POSITION PAPER

BILL: SB 794 – Behavioral Health Programs – Residential Programs – Food Service Facility Requirements

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations Committee

POSITION: Letter of Support as Amended

BILL ANALYSIS: SB 794, as amended, requires the Maryland Department of Health to develop food service regulations for behavioral health residential programs with fewer than 17 residents.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) and the Conference of Environmental Health Directors (the Conference) support the passage of SB 794 as amended in the Maryland Senate. As originally drafted, the bill exempted small behavioral health residential facilities from all food hygiene measures. This would have left residents at risk for preventable foodborne illness, some which can lead to serious illness and death. It should be noted that people in recovery from substance misuse are more likely than the average person to be infected with HIV, hepatitis, and other pathogens that leave them more susceptible to severe illness.

We acknowledge that the current regulatory structure is unnecessarily burdensome to small residential facilities. As amended, the bill will allow the Maryland Department of Health to develop regulations that ease requirements on facilities while sufficiently protecting the health and safety of those in recovery.

For these reasons, MACHO and the Conference submits this letter of support as amended for SB 794. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433.