



House Bill 1045

Public Safety – Safe Neighborhoods Pilot Program

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: March 9, 2023

To: Judiciary Committee

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1045 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would establish the Safe Neighborhoods Pilot Program and require annual funding from the State budget to implement the program through September of 2026.

Counties recognize the value of working in collaboration with residents to ensure the safety and habitability of communities through programs like the pilot this bill seeks to establish. Fortunately, counties have established their own programs that offer doorbell cameras and security systems to individuals who participate. As this process is well underway, and the local law enforcement agencies have jurisdiction over crimes in their communities and subsequent investigations, it stands to reason that funding to enhance and establish these programs should be in the hands of the teams taking the initiative locally. While counties applaud the State's interest in these programs, the MACo amendment to this bill would be to allow local jurisdictions to apply for and receive funds directly for both existing and new programs.

This approach could produce several benefits. First, local law enforcement agencies will be managing the programs. As they will be the closest to the process and best positioned to know where resources are needed, with funds in hand they can respond with ease and efficiency. This responsiveness is something all communities want from their local government resources.

Second, the ease of implementation for expanding an existing local model far exceeds the potentially cumbersome approach of reconstructing these programs to fit the new State law, even where valuable lessons have already been learned. For existing programs, procedures are already in place for material set-up, footage storage, training residents on the equipment, and the process for sharing materials when participants choose. Leveraging the prevailing infrastructure can act as an accelerant – bringing about useful results even faster.

Third, programs like this require trust and collaboration between local stakeholders to gain traction and have a meaningful impact. These initiatives should be taken up amongst the groups that have the greatest stake in their success and, in turn, will proffer a superior outcome that is sufficiently bolstered and informed by the local interests and concerns.

For a pilot program to prove its worth over its three-year span, counties should be entrusted with the funds directly to nurture and push these projects forward in their communities, where the true benefits will be realized. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 1045 **WITH AMENDMENTS** to support both new and existing local programs.