



House Bill 459

*Public Utilities - Street Lighting Equipment - Acquisitions and Reporting
(County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Date: March 28, 2023

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 459. This bill gives counties additional control over the costs, quality, and efficiency of streetlighting by clarifying the process for local governments to acquire and manage streetlights. Ultimately, the bill would empower counties to pursue streetlighting most appropriate for their communities, including through cost-saving and environmentally friendly technologies.

In 2007, the General Assembly passed legislation authorizing local governments to acquire and manage street light equipment from private utilities. However, few local governments have successfully done so since then, with the two parties unable to reach agreements on the fair market value of streetlighting equipment. Historically, utility companies have quoted prohibitively high costs when engaging with counties and municipalities on potential purchase of equipment.

This has prevented counties and municipalities from implementing greener lighting to save energy and money, like converting to LED lighting. As such, Maryland and its local governments are losing out. The transfer of ownership of streetlights from utilities to local governments has reportedly improved services and lowered costs for neighboring Washington, DC, as well as Pennsylvania, New York, and many other states.

By setting fair value market rates, HB 459 will level the playing field for local governments and will help counties achieve better services at lower costs and implement energy-efficient street lighting – a welcome change for counties, Maryland taxpayers, and the environment. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 459.