

**SB0522-EEE\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brianna January

Position: FAV



## **Senate Bill 522**

### *Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee

Date: February 8, 2024

From: Sarah Sample and Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 522. This bill increases the maximum fine that a charter county, through its “home rule” authority, may levy for a violation of a local ordinance. Additionally, it applies to charter county enforcement of the Fair Housing Act of 1988 and any local employment or public accommodation discrimination laws.

Ensuring compliance with local laws has a direct connection to quality-of-life standards that communities need to thrive. These violations can affect the look, smell, and feel of a community and even how community members interact with and support each other. When individuals and businesses create a habit of intentionally violating accepted standards that are required by law, those indiscretions erode the fabric that distinguishes a simple neighborhood from a true community of people.

Fines for community violations are at their best when they deter the root problems but avoid unfair application. Unfortunately, the original fine of \$1,000 for these types of violations has not kept pace with other market variables and inflation, and therefore, has become somewhat of a simple “cost of doing business” for entities in regular, even calculated, violation of these laws. A fine of \$5,000 for these violations is consistent with a penalty that will effectively, and appropriately, change behaviors. This will help restore the trust, protection, and assurance residents need to live, work, and thrive in any jurisdiction.

MACo appreciates the General Assembly’s understanding, concern, and willingness to address this matter. SB 522 is a reasonable step to do so and for these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 522 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

**BaltimoreCounty\_FAV\_SB0522.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Olszewski

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
*County Executive*

JENNIFER AIOSA  
*Director of Government Affairs*

AMANDA KONTZ CARR  
*Legislative Officer*

WILLIAM J. THORNE  
*Legislative Associate*

**BILL NO.:**            **SB 522**

**TITLE:**                Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws

**SPONSOR:**            Senator Augustine

**COMMITTEE:**        Education, Energy, and the Environment

**POSITION:**          **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**                February 8, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 522 – Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws. This legislation would allow charter counties to increase the maximum imposable civil or criminal fines up to \$5,000 from the current maximum of \$1,000 in enforcing local laws.

This legislation would give Baltimore County additional local control and the opportunity to continue making strides in modernizing local government. It is imperative as Baltimore County enters a challenging budgeting season that every option for continuing to deliver quality services to residents is explored. This legislation would give local laws more weight and disincentive people from violating local laws. Furthermore, the revenue generated from these fines would address the effects of inflation on budgeting, granting the County additional flexibility.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 522 from the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at [jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov).

# **HB 501-SB522 Position statement .pdf**

Uploaded by: Lorenzo Bellamy

Position: FAV



# THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700 County Council

## POSITION STATEMENT

**HB 501/SB 522 - Charter Counties Enforcement of Local Laws  
(Environment and Transportation; Education, Energy and Environment)  
Sponsors: Delegate Fennell and Senator Augustine**

### POSITION:

### SUPPORT

**HB-501/SB-522** – This bill will increase the maximum amount of a civil or criminal fine that a charter county may impose. With the passage of this bill, counties will be able to enforce local laws enacted by the county with greater effect. Counties and local municipalities have not seen an increase in their ability to charge more than \$1,000 since this law was passed in the 1990's. This bill will allow counties to fine property owners with dilapidated housing, homeowners who conduct illegal "for profit" house parties, and violators who illegally dump boats and other large items on our streets. Prince George's County residents are seeking compliance on neighborhood quality of life concerns. Violators have less incentive to comply when the fine is perceived as the cost of doing business. The county also supports a technical amendment that was offered to ensure the bill will be clearly enforceable within all sections of the Local Government Code.

For the foregoing reasons, the Prince George's County Council **SUPPORTS HB 501/SB 522** and respectfully requests your favorable consideration of its position.

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Prepared by: Bellamy Genn Group, LLC  
On behalf of Prince George's County Council

# **SB 522 - Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local L**

Uploaded by: Malcolm Augustine

Position: FWA

MALCOLM AUGUSTINE  
*Legislative District 47*  
Prince George's County

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Executive Nominations Committee

Education, Energy and the  
Environment Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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February 8, 2024

**Senate Bill 522 - Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws**

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **Senate Bill 522 - Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws**, which addresses critical concerns related to neighborhood quality of life by empowering local governments to enforce existing ordinances more effectively through increased fines for various violations such as dilapidated housing, illegal "for-profit" house parties, and the unlawful dumping of boats and other large items on our streets.

One of the primary issues that Senate Bill 522 seeks to address is the problem of dilapidated housing. Presently, the \$1,000 Charter County infraction, which was intended to act as a deterrent, has lost its efficacy due to inflation. Property owners who neglect their responsibilities find the current fine insufficient, leading to a situation where compliance is often disregarded. By offering the option to elevate the maximum civil and criminal fines to \$5,000, this bill aims to restore the deterrent effect and encourage property owners to maintain their residences, thus improving the overall living conditions for residents.

Another critical issue is the hosting of illegal "for profit" house parties, which pose significant challenges to community safety and cohesion. The current fine structure has proven inadequate to dissuade individuals from engaging in such activities, as the fine can be perceived as a mere operating cost. Senate Bill 522 addresses this by increasing the maximum fines, providing a more robust disincentive for those who would otherwise prioritize financial gain over the well-being of the community.

The improper disposal of boats and other large items on our streets is a growing concern that adversely impacts the aesthetics and safety of our neighborhoods. The current fine of \$1,000 is insufficient to discourage such illegal activities. Senate Bill 522 recognizes the urgency of addressing this issue by proposing a significant increase in fines, thereby discouraging the illegal dumping of large items and preserving the visual and environmental integrity of our communities.



MALCOLM AUGUSTINE  
*Legislative District 47*  
Prince George's County

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Executive Nominations Committee

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Environment Committee



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This legislation is a response to the calls for action from residents who are deeply invested in the well-being and quality of life in their neighborhoods. Residents have expressed frustration with the inadequate deterrent effect of the current fine structure and are seeking stronger measures to compel compliance with local ordinances. Senate Bill 522 aligns with these concerns, ensuring that the legislative framework is robust enough to address the evolving challenges faced by our communities.

Senate Bill 522 is a vital step toward reinforcing the effectiveness of jurisdictional infractions in addressing dilapidated housing, illegal house parties, and illegal dumping. The proposed option to increase fines from \$1,000 to \$5,000 demonstrates a commitment to protecting the quality of life for residents and ensuring that property owners and violators are held accountable for their actions. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I urge the committee to give a **favorable** report for **Senate Bill 522 - Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Malcolm Augustine".

Senator Malcolm Augustine

# **MMHA - 2024 - SB 522 - Charter Counties - increase**

Uploaded by: Aaron Greenfield

Position: UNF



**Bill Title: Senate Bill 522, Charter Counties - Enforcement of Local Laws**

**Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment**

**Date: February 8, 2024**

**Position: Unfavorable**

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities. Our members house over 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 522 allows a charter county to increase its civil and criminal fines and penalties from \$1000 to not exceed \$5,000.

Reasonable fines serve a necessary deterrent. However, allowing charter counties to increase civil and criminal fines and penalties 500% is excessive. We are concerned about the unintended consequences. Within our industry, this could lead to more evictions. Housing providers will be more inclined to find a resident in breach of lease if their conduct results in a \$5000 fine that the property owner must pay. Further, such fines may lead to increased litigation and legal challenges, as individuals and business entities contest the fairness of the fines. This can strain resources within the justice system and result in lengthy legal battles that further burden both the affected parties.

To mitigate these unintended consequences, the Committee should carefully consider the potential impacts of fines, ensure fairness and proportionality in application, and explore alternative approaches to address undesirable behaviors without resorting to punitive measures.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 522.

**Aaron J. Greenfield, MMHA Director of Government Affairs, 410.446.1992**

**SB 522-AOBA--UNF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ryan Washington

Position: UNF



**Bill No:** SB 522— Charter Counties - Enforcement of Local Laws

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and Environment

**Date:** February 8, 2024

**Position:** Unfavorable

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA) represents members who own or manage more than 23 million square feet of commercial office space and 133,000 apartment rental units in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties.

Senate Bill 522 would increase the maximum amount of a civil or criminal fine that may be imposed by a county to enforce local laws enacted by the local ordinances from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

AOBA is concerned with increasing the penalty for civil fees without justification. AOBA members are responsible housing providers who follow county ordinances and ensure compliance to avoid penalties or losing rental licenses. Increasing the fee to \$5,000 is excessive and may penalize housing providers operating in good faith to comply and, for certain circumstances, out of their realm of influence. For example, the enforcement agency cannot enforce specific local ordinances due to a shortage in staffing, or a resident causes a housing violation in their unit without proper notification from the housing provider to remediate.

**For these reasons, AOBA requests an unfavorable report on SB 522.** For further information, contact Ryan Washington, AOBA’s Government Affairs Manager, at 202-770-7713 or email [rwashington@aoba-metro.org](mailto:rwashington@aoba-metro.org).