

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

James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 214
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3745 · 301-858-3745
800-492-7122 Ext. 3745
Fax 410-841-3387 · 301-858-3387
Malcolm.Augustine@senate.state.md.us

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.

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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