



MARYLAND
Association of
COUNTIES

Senate Bill 235

Housing and Community Development - Project Restore Program - Establishment

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: January 21, 2025

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 235. This bill establishes the Project Restore Program, providing counties with resources to tackle vacancy and revitalize many of Maryland's historic business districts.

The economic reverberations both from the COVID-19 pandemic and from larger changes in how our economy functions have left many communities reeling. These shifts are most present in many of the state's historic business districts. For generations, these districts functioned as both the economic heart and social connective tissue for communities. However, these important corridors have declined in recent decades, causing a negative cascading effect in some surrounding areas.

By focusing on the improvement and occupancy of vacant commercial properties, SB 235 will stimulate economic development, foster job creation, and enhance the quality of life for residents. The program's emphasis on aiding small businesses contributes to the vitality and sustainability of local economies, a priority for Maryland's counties.

SB 235 puts another tool in the toolbox to address the economic challenges of today and to continue to keep Maryland a great place to call home for many days to come. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 235 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.