



Senate Bill 871

*Department of the Environment - Community Water and Sewerage Systems -
Cybersecurity Planning and Assessments*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 27, 2025

From: Karrington Anderson and Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 871 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill seeks to strengthen cybersecurity protections for public water and wastewater systems by requiring a Zero-Trust security model, annual third-party cybersecurity assessments, and certification of compliance with cybersecurity standards. While counties recognize the importance of cybersecurity enhancements, the mandated requirements in this bill pose significant financial and operational challenges for local governments.

Counties take cybersecurity seriously and follow established frameworks such as the NIST Cybersecurity Framework and the Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) Security Policy. However, SB 871 would require substantial upgrades to county IT infrastructure, including costly network restructuring, additional licensing, firewall reconfiguration, and ongoing maintenance. Many county IT directors acknowledge Zero-Trust as a long-term goal, but the transition requires significant investment. Compliance with annual third-party assessments is another major concern. While external assessments provide valuable insights, they are costly, and many counties rely on free assessments from CISA, which have long waitlists. Compliance with SB 871 would place an untenable fiscal burden on counties already struggling with workforce shortages and hiring freezes, making it extremely difficult to allocate the necessary resources for additional cybersecurity staff and administration.

For example, Calvert County estimates that compliance costs would total approximately \$1.6 million for FY26 and similarly for FY27, with ongoing annual costs of \$840,000 annually from FY28 to FY30. To ensure that counties can enhance cybersecurity in a financially sustainable manner, MACo urges amendments to shift the bill's mandates to best practices, allowing counties the flexibility to implement cybersecurity measures based on risk assessments and available funding. Additionally, State resources or grants could be provided to assist with the costs of compliance.

Counties fully support stronger cybersecurity for water and wastewater systems, but the fiscal and operational burdens of SB 871 must be addressed. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 871.