



Senate Bill 770

*Applicants for Positions Involving Direct Contact With Minors -
Required Information, Review Process, and Reporting - Alterations*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 21, 2025

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 770 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill expands the employee application and review procedures required for school systems, child care centers, and youth-serving organizations. For counties, this means extending these requirements to include recreational programs, summer camps, and recreational sports programs and teams.

Counties appreciate the interest in making sure all employees who interact with children in the local parks and recreation divisions are appropriately vetted. Current procedures already reflect that intent and are often a combination of criminal background checks, drug testing, fingerprinting, and child protective services clearances. These standards are reinforced by both county attorneys and risk managers, who help establish sensible practices in these and other operations. Further, recent statutory changes related to increased liability for county employees who supervise those who interact with children have necessitated even greater scrutiny for vetting and monitoring anyone who is intended to interact with children in a county role.

Counties believe current standards, outlined above, substantially protect children who might be interacting with adults during certain programming and would request an amendment to SB 770 to exclude local parks and recreation divisions. These departments can continue upholding clear and necessary standards for hiring practices, while not taking on an additional burden that is specifically designed for the hiring of school-based employees.

To illustrate county concerns, the circumstances for these types of hires in parks and recreation divisions are vastly different than those employed by the school systems. Education-based positions often have a longer lead time as well as a longer tenure of employment. Those employees are also interacting with children most days for extended periods of time throughout the year. In contrast, parks and recreation divisions, each year, are regularly hiring short-term, seasonal employees based on periodic programming, therefore the lead time is shorter than that of a school system, and their interaction times with children are a fraction of the time a teacher or school official would see.

Additionally, many such local hires are short-time staff: high-school- and college-aged applicants, teachers picking up extra seasonal work, parents looking to spend more time as a part of their kids' activities, and the like. The interest in these types of roles is often situational, based on the conclusion of

other obligations. The extended time required for the detailed provisions under SB 770 could leave these otherwise qualified candidates excluded, simply due to extended time demands, and leave seasonal and short-term roles unfillable.

Counties are good partners in establishing strong standards when vetting all employees who would interact with children. With amendments to the bill, this effort can be maintained without adding additional burdens to the hiring process. Accordingly, MACo would urge a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 770.