



House Bill 751

Municipalities - Annexed Land - Land Use and Density

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

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From: Dominic J. Butchko and Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 751. This bill would effectively eliminate the longstanding transition period before a municipality is enabled to change the underlying zoning, following an annexation of previously unincorporated areas. This path to rapid-fire zoning change could overwhelm county infrastructure and school planning.

Under current and longstanding Maryland law, when a municipality annexes land, it must wait for a transitionary period of five years before the underlying zoning of that area can be changed. During this transition period, the area remains within the municipality but must reflect the zoning designation it was given initially by the county. This transition period is vital because as the builders, owners, operators, and funders of most public infrastructure in the state, counties need time to plan and potentially expand services which will likely be under increasing demand.

Abolishing this transition period overnight will have sweeping and potentially troubling consequences. Handing annexed lands with immediate zoning control to municipal officials risks overwhelming infrastructure that municipal leaders neither manage nor oversee. Likewise, nearby communities may struggle as their services and neighborhoods bear the sudden impact. This sudden shift could have a disastrous effect on road capacity, wastewater treatment, classroom size, emergency services, etc.

HB 751 reverses a set of laws designed to ensure a smooth and seamless transition of control of annexed lands, preventing county-led public services from being overwhelmed. HB 751 effectively overturns this and opens the door to reckless development-driven annexations. Accordingly, MACo urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 751.

