



## House Bill 1296

### *Environment – Managed Aquifer Recharge Pilot Program – Establishment*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: March 5, 2025

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1296. This bill authorizes the Maryland Department of the Environment to establish the Managed Aquifer Recharge Pilot Program, potentially helping local leaders improve healthy water supply programs.

As climate change becomes an enduring reality, one of the growing challenges for policymakers is how to establish patterns of smarter and less destructive resource use. One of the most critical resource use patterns to reform is water. Today, water infrastructure primarily operates in a linear fashion, where water is pumped in from a source, cleaned at a water treatment plant, and distributed into the community, after which it enters the wastewater treatment system, and is finally discharged after treatment. This linear process effectively builds in a level of waste, as potable water or water which can be easily cleaned into potable water, is discharged instead of being recycled.

In Maryland and other jurisdictions, wastewater treatment technology already restores water back to a safe drinkable quality, meaning that final discharge meets the health and safety requirements to be safely re-entered into the system or into a containment area like an aquifer. HB 1296 is innovative because – instead of relying on a more wasteful linear system – it gives counties a tool to develop more circular systems, reducing both waste and demand for increasingly limited supplies of fresh and usable water.

Counties support HB 1296 as it creates another tool in the toolbox to serve our mutual constituents in smarter and more sustainable ways. For this reason, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 1296 a **FAVORABLE** report.