Senate Bill 311

Government Officials' Family Protection Act of 2025

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**   To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: January 29, 2025   From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 311**. This bill extends existing protections for several local officials, to include their immediate family members. These safeguards will help reassure public servants that their own safety and that of their family members are taken seriously in the eyes of the law.

National, state, and local politics have become more tense in recent years. The number of incidents and threats against local officials have steadily increased as political climates intensify. As quasi-political entities, local government officials and workforces are susceptible to some of the challenges that materialize from these kinds of shifts in political temperament. Often, as residents' ire spreads to public officials' homes, their family members are subject to threats, and in some instances become direct targets of aggression.

Locally elected officials, election judges, law enforcement, health officers, school administrators, and DEI directors are no strangers to these real and often threatening situations. The fear and discomfort this can create for individuals could lead to the erosion of vital local government leadership and workforces. Establishing that penalties for these types of offenses apply more broadly sends the message that this behavior will not be tolerated. Counties would welcome even further eligibility for other public sector staff not currently identified in these laws.

Encouraging public service is necessary to ensure communities are safe and productive for all residents. The provisions of this bill help counterbalance how threats can deter engagement. Counties appreciate that this bill will ensure appropriate accountability and deterrence for offenders who would threaten local government officials and their families. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 311.