

SB 820 - MML - FAV - Correct Version.pdf

Uploaded by: Angelica Bailey Thupari

Position: FAV



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 4, 2025

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings

Bill: SB 820 - Municipalities - Enforcement of Ordinances and Resolutions

Position: Support

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League (“MML”) enthusiastically **supports** Senate Bill 820, which increases the maximum civil and misdemeanor fines that may be imposed by a municipality for the enforcement of a municipal ordinance, resolution, bylaw, or regulation from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

This measure is permissive rather than mandatory, granting municipalities the option to increase fines if they choose. By raising the maximum fines for these civil and misdemeanor offenses by \$4,000 each, the bill has the potential to generate additional revenue for municipalities.

Beyond financial benefits, the increased fine limits serve as a stronger deterrent against potential bad actors. Our members indicate that \$1,000 is not enough to discourage repeat offenders, nor is it sufficient to cover the cost to the municipality to fix some of the applicable offenses like illegal dumping or vandalism.

However, we recognize the significant financial challenges many Marylanders face. Our members consistently indicate that they prefer to resolve these types of issues through community mediation and/or warnings rather than imposing fines, when appropriate. They are confident that any authority to increase fines will be exercised responsibly and not misused.

A similar measure ([HB 501/SB 522](#), 2024) passed with ease last year but was limited to charter counties due to logistical constraints, excluding municipalities. We are grateful to the sponsors and their constituents for advancing this bill this year.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests that the Committee provide Senate Bill 820 with a **favorable** report. For more information, please contact Angelica Bailey Thupari, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at angelicab@mdmunicipal.org or (443) 756-0071. Thank you for your consideration.

The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.

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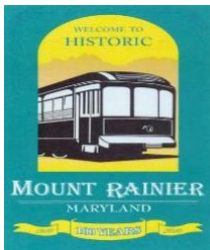
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MR Support for Senate Bill 820.pdf

Uploaded by: Mayor Celina Benitez

Position: FAV



Office of The Mayor Celina Benitez

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 MountRainierMD.org

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Friday, February 28, 2025
Re: **Support for Senate Bill 820**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

On behalf of the City of Mount Rainier, I am writing to express our strong support for **Senate Bill 820**, which seeks to increase the maximum fines municipalities can impose for criminal violations and municipal infractions.

This bill is a critical step in strengthening local governance and ensuring municipalities have the necessary enforcement mechanisms to maintain community standards.

Senate Bill 820 proposes raising the maximum fine for municipal ordinance violations from \$1,000 to \$5,000, allowing local governments to enforce their laws more effectively. Many municipalities, including Mount Rainier, struggle to address persistent violations due to outdated penalty limits that fail to serve as meaningful deterrents. Increasing the maximum fine will enhance our ability to protect public health, safety, and overall quality of life by ensuring compliance with zoning, land use, and public nuisance regulations.

The City of Mount Rainier is committed to fostering a safe and well-regulated community, and the passage of **Senate Bill 820** will empower local governments to hold violators accountable while preserving the integrity of our local laws. We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge the General Assembly to pass this legislation.

For these reasons, we urge a **Favorable Report on Senate Bill 820**.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important legislation. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina R. Benitez, City of Mount Rainier

SB820_Letter of Support_PGCMA.pdf

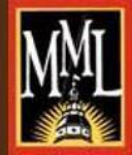
Uploaded by: Prince George's County Municipal Association

Position: FAV



Prince George's County Municipal Association

An Association of 27 Municipalities



March 4, 2025

The Honorable William J. Smith, Chairman
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Position: Support

Re: SB820 - Municipalities - Enforcement of Ordinances and Resolutions

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. The Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) writes on behalf of the 27 municipalities that collectively represent more than 955,000 residents, to share our strong support of Senate Bill 820, which would increase the maximum allowable fine from \$1,000 to \$5,000 for violations of municipal ordinances.

This legislation is critically needed to enable more effective enforcement of local ordinances, help maintain clean, safe, and vibrant communities, and provide municipalities with updated enforcement tools that reflect current economic realities and act as meaningful deterrents for serious violations and violators.

Importantly, this bill is enabling legislation that gives municipalities discretion in setting appropriate fines without mandating across-the-board fee increases. It allows for targeted enforcement focused on the most serious violations while mirroring the updated enforcement allowances given for charter counties by this legislature in 2024.

Our member municipalities need modern enforcement tools to address contemporary challenges. The current \$1,000 maximum fine has become inadequate as a deterrent for egregious violations or repeat offenders. Some violators simply view the current fine structure as a "cost of doing business" rather than a meaningful penalty.

This measured increase will help ensure compliance with local ordinances designed to protect public health, safety, and quality of life.

We respectfully urge the Committee to submit a favorable report for Senate Bill 820.

Sincerely,

Jenni Pompei

Jenni Pompei

PGCMA Legislative Committee Co-Chair



Prince George's County Municipal Association

An Association of 27 Municipalities



Prince George's County Municipal Association (PGCMA) members: Berwyn Heights, Bladensburg, Bowie, Brentwood, Capitol Heights, Cheverly, College Park, Colmar Manor, Cottage City, District Heights, Eagle Harbor, Edmonston, Fairmount Heights, Forest Heights, Glenarden, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Landover Hills, Laurel, Morningside, Mount Rainier, New Carrollton, North Brentwood, Riverdale Park, Seat Pleasant, University Park, and Upper Marlboro.

Senate Bill 820.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Franklin

Position: FAV

Mayor

Sarah Franklin

Commissioners

Derrick Brooks
Charles Colbert
Karen Lott
Alma Prevatte



Friday, February 20, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 820 - Municipalities - Enforcement of Ordinances and Resolutions

Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

On behalf of the Town of Upper Marlboro, I strongly support Senate Bill 820, which increases the maximum fines municipalities may impose for ordinance and resolution violations. This bill is essential for empowering local governments to uphold community standards and maintain residents' quality of life.

Increasing the maximum fine to \$5,000 for municipal infractions and misdemeanors will provide a more effective deterrent. This is particularly crucial for towns like Upper Marlboro, which often struggle with irresponsible property managers. The current \$1,000 limit is frequently insufficient, especially for repeat offenses and more serious infractions.

Local ordinances in Upper Marlboro are vital not only for preserving public health, safety, and environmental standards but also for our economic development. This bill will significantly enhance our ability to enforce these ordinances, ensuring that properties in our downtowns are well-maintained and safe, which is critical to achieving our economic development goals. It will allow us to ensure compliance with regulations designed to protect our community's well-being and foster a thriving business environment.

We commend Senators Watson and Rosapepe for sponsoring this important legislation and urge its swift passage. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me if you require further information or wish to discuss this matter.

Sincerely,


Sarah Franklin
Mayor

Town of Upper Marlboro
14211 School Lane
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
(301) 627 6905
info@uppermarlboromd.gov

SB820FAVCPkMayorLtr.pdf

Uploaded by: Sheila McDonald

Position: FAV



CITY OF COLLEGE PARK

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL

7401 BALTIMORE AVENUE SUITE 201 COLLEGE PARK MD 20740 | COLLEGEPAKMD.GOV

February 27, 2025

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Stuart Adams

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DISTRICT 4

Maria E. Mackie

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202.993.0395

Denise C. Mitchell

Mayor Pro Tem

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301.852.8126

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 820 Municipalities – Enforcement of Ordinances and Resolutions

Dear Chair Smith:

I am writing to express the City of College Park's strong support for SB 820, which would increase the maximum fine municipalities can impose from \$1,000 to \$5,000. We believe that the increase will provide important incentives for compliance and meaningful and appropriate penalties for serious violations.

We were pleased that last year SB 522 was enacted to increase the maximum fine that charter counties may impose. SB 820 will provide the same increase for municipalities. It is an unfortunate situation that some property owners treat fines of even \$1,000 as a "cost of doing business" and do not correct code and other violations in a timely manner. This bill provides the possibility of a higher incentive and, if imposed, a fine amount more in line with the public damage and cost to obtain compliance.

On behalf of our residents, I respectfully urge you to support SB 820.

Sincerely,

Fazlul Kabir
Mayor

cc: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senator Jim Rosapepe, District 21

Takoma Park 2025 - SB 820 FAV - Max Penalties - Se

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

Support Senate Bill 820 - Municipalities – Enforcement of Ordinances and Resolutions

Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 28, 2025

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of SB 820, which would enable municipalities to increase, from \$1,000.00 to up to \$5,000.00, the maximum amount of a fine for a municipal infraction that may be imposed by a municipality to enforce their enacted ordinances and resolutions.

The City of Takoma Park manages certain permitting and code enforcement measures either directly or in cooperation with Montgomery County. Our goal is to make sure that residents comply with the City's laws, not revenue generation. SB 820 provides flexibility to increase maximum fines, which could be a helpful mechanism for our local government to increase compliance.

We appreciate having a wider range of options to determine local fines. The City does not use fines as a means for resolving infractions. So, it is critical that municipalities can exercise their judgment when establishing the fine amount.

We urge a favorable vote in Committee on SB 820. Thank you for your consideration.

MMHA - 2025 - SB820 - UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Matthew Pipkin

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 820

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Bill: Senate Bill 820 Municipalities - Enforcement of Ordinances and Resolutions

Date: March 4th, 2025

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members house more than 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA's membership consists of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities and more than 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 820 seeks to increase from \$1,000 to \$5,000 the maximum amount of a criminal fine or municipal infraction that may be imposed by a municipality to enforce certain ordinances and resolutions enacted by the municipality.

Consistent with MMHA testimony from last session's House Bill 501¹ that increased charter counties' ability to fine from \$1,000 to \$5,000, MMHA believes that reasonable fines serve as a necessary deterrent to bad actors. However, an increase in civil fines and penalties from \$1,000 to \$5,000 (a 400% increase) is punitive. MMHA is concerned about the unintended consequences. Within our industry, this could lead to more evictions in municipalities. Housing providers will be more inclined to find a resident in breach of lease if their conduct results in a \$5,000 fine that the property owner must pay. Further, such fines may lead to increased litigation and legal challenges, as individuals and business entities contest the fairness of the fines. This will further strain resources within the overwhelmed District Court, and result in lengthy legal battles that further burden both the affected parties.

To mitigate these unintended consequences, the Committee should carefully consider the potential impacts of fines, ensure fairness and proportionality in application, and explore alternative approaches to address undesirable behaviors without resorting to unreasonable measures. For these reasons, we respectfully request an **unfavorable report** on Senate Bill 820.

Please contact Matthew Pipkin, Jr. at (443) 995-4342 or mpipkin@mmhaonline.org with any questions.

¹Maryland General Assembly. (2024). House Bill 501: Charter Counties – Enforcement of Local Laws. Chapter 811. Retrieved from https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024rs/Chapters_noln/CH_811_hb0501t.pdf