



House Bill 1361

*Public Safety - Law Enforcement Agencies - Standardized Report Writing System
(Maryland Statewide Law Enforcement Report Writing Standardization Act)*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: February 25, 2025

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1361. This bill requires all law enforcement agencies statewide to adopt a state-mandated, uniform reporting system centralized at the state level. Additionally, it mandates the discontinued use of current local reporting systems that house not only police reports but also large amounts of sensitive information and vital documents regarding victims and people of interest, as well as investigatory reports, evidence, and the like.

Counties appreciate the interest in ensuring law enforcement agencies are sharing important information to the greatest extent possible, but the preemption, intrusion, and debilitating nature of the bill represents significant barriers to effective community policing. As such, the bill represents a meaningful disruption to law enforcement operations statewide, and in doing so, shifts a significant financial burden on to the State. Counties also question the ability of the state to effectively afford a program like this under current budget circumstances. Finally, providing for the unique needs of every local law enforcement agency is impractical and likely impossible. As an example, Prince George's alone has more than 25 local police forces within its boundaries.

There is great uncertainty around how this proposed system will be able to provide all the services necessary to law enforcement while ensuring the most stringent standards for investigation records and personnel files, as well as data privacy and protections for residents. The provisions of this bill would require extensive time to study the needs of all local law enforcement agencies but even after that research is concluded, it is highly unlikely an effective tool would be sufficient to warrant the closure of all existing local report databases, without serious detriment to local residents and public safety officials.

County law enforcement agencies are currently sharing important information to the greatest extent possible and cooperating as necessary on investigations involving multiple agencies. The provisions of the bill as drafted simply bring too many questions and barriers into play when trying to protect and serve residents statewide. Accordingly, MACo **OPPOSES HB 1361** and urges an **UNFAVORABLE report**.