



House Bill 1164

Counties and Municipalities - Homelessness - Local Laws (Right to Rest Act)

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: March 11, 2025

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1164. This bill prohibits counties from enacting or enforcing local laws that could impact or are intended to impact individuals experiencing homelessness. Specifically, it restricts local governments from enforcing laws that regulate sleeping in public spaces, using makeshift protection against the elements, or sleeping in legally parked vehicles. While well-intentioned, this bill represents a broad preemption of local authority, undermines public safety efforts, and could create public health concerns.

Local governments have invested substantial resources in supportive services, shelters, outreach programs, and public health initiatives to assist individuals experiencing homelessness. However, HB 1164 would prevent counties from enforcing reasonable policies that ensure safe and orderly use of public spaces.

By prohibiting enforcement against resting or sleeping in public areas, HB 1164 could unintentionally exacerbate conditions that endanger public health, including unregulated encampments and improper waste disposal. Furthermore, this bill eliminates a key tool for local governments to engage with individuals in need, often through outreach efforts connected to enforcement actions that encourage participation in available services.

HB 1164 imposes a one-size-fits-all mandate that disregards the unique needs of Maryland's diverse communities. Counties must retain the ability to develop tailored solutions that balance compassion with public safety and health considerations. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 1164.