



House Bill 985

Police Discipline - Administrative Charging Committees - Additional Charging Committee

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: February 25, 2025

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 985 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill allows a county to authorize the use of an additional Administrative Charging Committee (ACC) to review investigations into police misconduct that are the result of a civilian complaint. Counties urge some clarifying amendments to ensure proper implementation of this facet, when needed.

After almost five years of implementation, it is clear minor changes to the investigation and review procedures are necessary to ensure the public has effective means for civilian oversight and remuneration on behalf of residents. An independent report from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy recently confirmed that all statewide Police Accountability Boards, applicable law enforcement agencies, and Administrative Charging Committees have raised concerns with the timeline for investigations. While the challenges differ across jurisdictions, the timeline concerns, in varying ways, have hindered the process. Unfortunately, this has the impact of either missing the charging deadline or rushing the review process. Both instances serve to undermine the quality of civilian oversight, which erodes public trust, which is counter to the intent of the process.

A backlog of cases and missed deadlines bodes poorly for all parties involved. Authorizing an additional charging committee would certainly come with increased costs, but the local jurisdiction could exercise the authority only as needed. Counties know this will be a useful tool but offer one amendment. The bill should explicitly state that the auxiliary ACC is subject to all the same standards and requirements enacted locally, for the primary ACC, regardless of how often the authorization is employed or the time frame in operation. This will ensure equity and consistency in the case review process as well as protection from increased litigation arising from inconsistencies.

Counties support the intent to streamline the police accountability process and believe the changes outlined above could improve proceedings. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on **HB 985**.