



MARYLAND
Association of
COUNTIES

House Bill 186

Police Discipline - Trial Board Composition

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: February 25, 2025

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 186 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill expands the pool of individuals who can act as the chair of a trial board for the review of a civilian complaint of police misconduct. The new language would include an eligible attorney that meets certain qualifications as enumerated in the bill.

After almost five years of implementation following the passage of the Maryland Police Accountability Act, it is clear minor changes to procedures for various components would be a benefit to implementation. This bill looks to address one of those challenges that has been presented. Current law requires the trial board chair to be an actively serving or retired administrative law judge or a retired judge of the district or circuit court. This is a requirement that has proved to be a staffing challenge in several jurisdictions, so the flexibility that HB 186 allows would be a welcome change. Counties believe this will help fill these positions faster and lead to greater public trust by providing a more efficient process.

Counties would also welcome the ability to specify standards or process for the selection of the people to serve in these roles. The current standards for a qualifying judge and those outlined in the bill for a qualifying attorney are vastly different. An amendment should be included to clarify exactly how integrity, wisdom, and sound legal knowledge are to be assessed. This will ensure the candidates for these highly sensitive roles are stringent enough to not erode the credibility of the proceedings. Additionally, counties welcome clarifying language that jurisdictions with a sufficient process for staffing judges are authorized to maintain the existing local procedures. These changes will allow for flexibility where it is needed and continuity where it is not.

Counties believe these amendments are necessary to uphold a strong and honorable process while improving efficiency. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on **HB 186**.