



House Bill 691

State Government - Procedures - Permitting Efficiency for Housing Development Projects

MACo Position: **LETTER OF
INFORMATION**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: March 31, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

MACo respectfully submits this **Letter of Information** on HB 691. The bill directs state departments to review and analyze housing-related permitting processes and to implement streamlining measures intended to speed up reviews. As part of that effort, HB 691 also authorizes the State to enter into delegation agreements with counties, under which a county could review and approve certain State permits related to housing production.

For the past three years, Maryland's counties and the General Assembly have shared a clear priority: expanding the supply of affordable housing. That commitment is reflected in major recent actions, including the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024 (HB 538/SB 484) and legislation authorizing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) statewide in 2025 (HB 1466/SB 891). MACo played a pivotal role in advancing these—and many other—housing measures during this period. That work culminated in MACo's 2026 legislative initiative bill, the Building Affordably in My Back Yard (BAMBY) Act, a county-backed comprehensive and pragmatic path forward to meet the current moment. Counties welcome tools to help advance housing at all levels, where it fits within their infrastructure capacity.

A central focus for the Administration, local governments, and the public has been evaluating how the current system functions and identifying where government processes can be improved. The Administration's Fall 2025 executive order called for broad streamlining across State government. MACo's BAMBY proposal similarly emphasizes the need to address specific State-level bottlenecks, improve predictability, and create pathways for regulatory certainty, including options for counties to adopt faster administrative review processes. HB 691 aligns with this broader objective of improving permitting performance and transparency.

As legislators consider the delegation concept within HB 691, counties offer a note of caution. Local governments are already under significant operational strain in meeting existing State mandates and service demands. While county-led review may, in some contexts, be conducted efficiently, many county departments are approaching the practical limits of additional workload absorption without corresponding resources. If delegation agreements prove effective, they should be structured with clear parameters, sustainable funding, and accountability to ensure they do not function as a cost-shift from the State to local governments.

Overall, MACo appreciates HB 691's direction toward clearer, more transparent processes for housing approvals. While counties will continue to evaluate implementation considerations, the bill represents constructive progress toward the shared state and local goal of increasing housing supply and affordability.