

HEARING DATE: March 24th, 2026

BILL NO: HB 240

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: Support

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Andrew Wilson (443) 721-6789

TITLE: Local Comprehensive Plans - Guidance Materials and Notification to the Department of Planning

BILL ANALYSIS:

HB 240 adds a requirement of the local planning commission/board to notify the Department of Planning once it begins a review of the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan and stipulates that MDP, in consultation with other state agencies and offices deemed appropriate, shall develop and maintain guidance materials to distribute to the commission. The review that the planning commission/board must conduct, more commonly known as the "10-year review", is statutorily required to occur once every decade, and is the first step for a local jurisdiction to amend their comprehensive plan if they determine they need to do so.

POSITION AND RATIONALE:

Given the diversity in both resources and staff each planning commission has, MDP is pursuing this bill so staff in its Planning Services division can easily connect each commission with resources and guidance materials to help them through the comprehensive planning process.

Under current law, the only time that non-charter counties or municipalities are required to contact MDP and other applicable state agencies during the drafting or updating of a comprehensive plan is 60 days before the plan's public hearing per §3-203 of the Land Use Article (LUA). Charter counties are not required to contact MDP about their comprehensive plans unless their charters require it. During the time leading up to the public hearing where the local planning commission recommends the draft plan to the legislative body, more commonly known as the 60-day review period, MDP and other agencies have the opportunity to comment and

recommend changes to the proposed plan. Over time MDP has received extensive feedback from local jurisdictions stating that when they receive these comments and amendment recommendations from state agencies it is often too late for them to be effectively implemented. Both charter counties (LUA §1-416) and non-charter counties and municipalities (LUA §3-301) are required every ten years to review their comprehensive plan and, if necessary, amend the plan. To provide more meaningful assistance in the comprehensive planning process and ensure localities are following planning best practices, MDP wishes to amend LUA §1-416 and LUA §3-301 requiring local jurisdictions to notify MDP when they begin the review of the comprehensive plan. Within 60 days of this notification MDP will provide the locality with a series of guidance documents and resources to aid in the comprehensive planning process. The development of these guidance materials will be led by MDP with fellow state agencies as deemed appropriate and will be crafted in a way to link localities to what each state agency expects out of the finished plan as well as provide examples of best practices. If followed properly, these materials will lead to the adoption of more impactful plans and limit the back-end workload of agencies and time crunch for localities during the 60-day review process.

MDP Position

The Maryland Department of Planning respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 240