



House Bill 115

Maryland Income Tax Refund – Warrant Intercept Program – Termination Repeal

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways & Means Committee

Date: February 6, 2019

From: Natasha Mehu and Les Knapp

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 115 as it repeals the sunset on a program that has been a successful tool for counties to address outstanding arrest warrants.

The Warrant Intercept Program has been an effective partnership between the counties who have been piloting the program and the Comptroller's Office. The program provides a safe and controlled process for individuals with outstanding warrants to be notified about the warrants and to turn themselves in to law enforcement. In counties that opt into the program, the Comptroller informs individuals about their outstanding warrants and may withhold their tax return until law enforcement indicates the warrant has been satisfied. The program was set to sunset on September 30, 2019. HB 115 would repeal that sunset, allowing the program to continue indefinitely and affording the ability for additional counties to opt into the program.

Currently, six counties participate in the program: Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Harford, Howard, Prince George's, and Washington. According to the fiscal note, the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) reports that the Comptroller's Office withheld the income tax refunds of 1,184 individuals in 2018. This totaled \$816,427 in withheld refunds or about \$690 per person. The program has demonstrated its success since its initial launch in Anne Arundel County in 2012. It is anticipated that more counties may join the program.

The Maryland Income Tax Refunds Warrant Intercept Program 2017 Annual Report notes that GOCCP, in consultation with the Comptroller's Office, recommends continuing and expanding the program; counties strongly agree. It saves law enforcement from confronting individuals with outstanding warrants in potentially hostile environments and offers those individuals a means of turning themselves in after making proper arrangements and without public embarrassment. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 115.