



## House Bill 326

### *Housing and Community Development –Business Lending and Neighborhood Revitalization*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**  
**WITH AMENDMENTS**

Date: March 31, 2016

To: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs  
and Budget and Taxation Committees

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 326 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. MACo supports the increased investment in and expansion of the Department's neighborhood revitalization programs, but seeks a longer time frame for the local government approval process over projects located within their jurisdiction.

HB 326 expands and strengthens small business lending and neighborhood support programs operated by the Department of Housing and Community Development. The bill would increase the availability of financing tools and expand their geographic boundaries. Local governments benefit from these changes either directly as eligible applicants, or indirectly through assistance to businesses and community development organizations within targeted locally designated communities.

While MACo appreciates the bolstered resources for local development, counties are concerned with the 45-day time frame for local approval. A project must receive approval from the local governing body in the form of a resolution or letter before the project may proceed. MACo believes a longer time period would be more reasonable to gather appropriate local input for the required local sign-off.

These approvals are necessary safeguards. They ensure that before a project comes to fruition it has the full support of the local government and conforms to the plans the governing body has established for the community. For some counties, the 45-day window may be too narrow due to the infrequency of governing body meetings and the limited number of staff to perform the necessary review of the projects. Public notice and participation requirements make a rapid turn-around difficult – and the bill's default makes the timing very important.

A 90-day turnaround on a final local decision should provide ample time for these projects to proceed, and may even encourage earlier outreach as projects are planned.

MACo proposes the following amendments to address these county concerns:

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 10, in line 16, strike "45", and insert "90".

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 14, in line 5, strike "45", and insert "90".

AMENDMENT NO. 3

On pages 19, in line 22, strike "45", and insert "90".

Many local governments benefit from these programs and the investment and revitalization they provide to their communities. Counties support the bill as it intends to improve these programs, but requests a longer time for the local government to provide approval. For these reasons MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 326.