



House Bill 326

Housing and Community Development –Business Lending and Neighborhood Revitalization

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: February 9, 2016

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 to retain the local government approval authority 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 provisions of the bill that would strip local governments of their authority to approve or disapprove of projects occurring within their communities. Currently, a project must receive approval from the local governing body in the form of a resolution or letter before the project may proceed. This bill would remove that authority and instead establish a “notice with opportunity to comment” process. MACo believes the express local government approval authority should stay intact.

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. The local government should have an affirmative and binding say over local development. The ability to simply provide comment is not sufficient and removes a long-standing authority.

MACo proposes the following amendments to address these county concerns:

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 2 in line 10, strike “and”, insert “,” and after “4-201(a) insert “6-206(b) and 6-405(c)”.

On page 2, in line 20, strike “6-206(b),” and in line 21 before “6-310” insert “AND”, and strike “, and 6-405(c)”

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 9, strike in their entirety lines 6 through 23, inclusive.

AMENDMENT NO. 3

On page 12, in line 20, strike the bracket; in line 22 strike beginning with the close bracket down through "COMMENT" in line 23.

AMENDMENT NO. 4

On pages 16 and 17, strike in their entirety the lines beginning on page 16, line 30, down through page 17, line 17.

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 request that the local government’s approval authority be preserved. For these reasons MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 326.