



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES, INC.

BILL NO.: House Bill 366

TITLE: Public Safety – Building Performance Standards – Fire and Life Safety

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

DATE: February 16, 2012

COMMITTEE: Environmental Matters

CONTACT: Leslie Knapp Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** House Bill 366. The bill prohibits a local jurisdiction from adopting local amendments to the Maryland Building Performance Standards (MBPS) if the amendments weaken fire and life safety provisions contained in the Standards.

HB 366 would broadly restrict the ability of a local government to make even the most reasonable amendment to their building codes and instead will require that all new buildings covered by the MBPS be constructed to fully integrate a wide range of life safety provisions, including stairwell geometry, wind resistance standards, and other safety provisions, regardless of the need for these features in a particular jurisdiction.

Some jurisdictions will see an increase in inspection and training costs to manage new MBPS standards that do not currently apply in that jurisdiction. The bill will also lead to an increase in home prices in these jurisdictions, particularly rural areas, likely affecting the availability of affordable housing.

MACo is not opposed to reasonable building safety standards but HB 366 is overbroad and would unnecessarily restrict the ability of a local government from modifying the MBPS to mesh with the unique circumstances of its jurisdiction. The bill would also disproportionately affect housing costs in some rural jurisdictions. Accordingly, MACo recommends the Committee issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 366.