



House Bill 663

Constitution – Local Government – Legal Notices

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

Date: February 23, 2016

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr. & Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 663. The bill would provide charter counties with a needed alternative to publishing certain kinds of legal notices in a newspaper of general circulation.

HB 663 is a constitutional amendment that allows a charter county to publish a summary of its proposed laws and ordinances in a manner specified by the General Assembly. Currently, the Maryland Constitution requires the summary to be published for two weeks in at least one newspaper of general circulation within the county.

As with other types of legal notices, there is a cost for charter counties to publish its summary in a newspaper as opposed to an online or similar method. To the extent the General Assembly authorized online publication, charter counties would have a cheaper and more environmentally friendly alternative than newspaper publication.

The bill would modernize outmoded notice requirements in State law. Research indicates that the Internet has surpassed radio and newspapers as the main source of news among adults and may overtake television as the top news source in the next few years.¹ Conversely, newspaper circulation fell around 3% from 2013 to 2014 (daily and Sunday circulation). Weekday circulation has fallen 19% since 2004.²

In conclusion, HB 663 acknowledges technological and cultural changes about how people seek out information, provides an alternative to newspaper publication that would be directed by the General Assembly, and would save local governments much needed resources. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 663 a **FAVORABLE** report.

¹ See *Internet Gains on Television as Public's Main News Source*, Pew Research Center (January 4, 2011).

² See *State of the News Media 2015*, Pew Research Center (April 29, 2015).