



House Bill 864

Distribution of Marriage Ceremony Fees

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: March 2, 2017

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 864. This bill would change the way counties collect and remit marriage fees, overriding a variety of locally-supported arrangements developed over time through state law. Counties are concerned this bill will create undue administrative burdens and infringe on local decision-making.

Under current law, marriage fees are collected by a judge, clerk, or deputy clerk. From the fee, \$10 is paid into each county's general fund. The remainder of the fee in most counties is retained by the clerk (and disbursed to the State general fund); however, in some counties, a portion of the remaining fee is paid to a local historical society. In each case, these arrangements were developed through local legislation – much of which is upheld by the new centralized statewide proposal in HB 864.

This bill would mandate that counties, after allocating a portion of marriage fees to their general funds, remit the remainder of the fees to the State Comptroller. The State Comptroller would then be responsible for dispersing the funds to Preservation Maryland, Inc. for the promotion of historical preservation projects. This new scheme would essentially override the current collection and remittance systems developed through a variety of county-by-county agreements and legislation.

Changing the way marriage fees are collected and remitted could create unnecessary administrative burdens for county governments. Furthermore, the bill does not allow for county input on local preservation projects funded by Preservation Maryland, Inc.

MACo believes that HB 864, by overriding local arrangements set to respond to individual county needs, could create unnecessary administrative burdens and does not provide local governments with input on local preservation projects, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 864 and recommends the Committee issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report.