



## House Bill 896

### *Joint Committee on Behavioral Health and Opioid Use Disorders*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: April 7, 2015

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 896. This bill brings together a joint legislative committee to oversee, review and evaluate state and local programs to treat and reduce behavioral health and opioid use disorders.

Opioid-related deaths and usage continues to rise in epidemic proportions. As part of its 2015 initiatives, MACo advocates for comprehensive legislation and budget initiatives to address the growing opioid problem confronting each county and the unique needs of their communities.

As originally introduced HB 896 established an Opioid Use Disorder Consortium to develop a strategic statewide plan, including a timeline for actions, to treat and reduce opioid use disorders in the state. The Consortium was to convene workgroups to study the prescription drug monitoring program; prescriber and provider education; treatment; public education and awareness; and data analysis. It was also to hold roundtables across the state to receive input from local officials and experts on drafting recommendations for the strategic statewide plan.

As amended HB 896 creates a joint legislative committee that will oversee the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, as well as state and local programs, to treat and reduce behavioral health disorders and opioid use disorders. The purpose of the committee is to review the Governor's Heroin and Opioid Emergency Task Force's final report; to review and monitor the activities of the Governor's Inter-Agency Heroin and Opioid Coordinating Council; and to evaluate the effectiveness of programs, policies and practices in the state.

The amendments to the bill will allow the joint committee to coordinate with and build upon the governor's administration efforts to address behavioral health and opioid use disorder issues plaguing the state. This approach maximizes information sharing and the leveraging of existing resources. For these reasons MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 896.