



House Bill 1045

Land Use – Comprehensive Plans – Housing Element

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: March 5, 2019

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1045. The bill would require counties to address affordable housing issues in a new comprehensive plan element that are better addressed through other mechanisms.

HB 1045 would require a local government to include a housing element in its comprehensive plan. The element must include a plan to address: (1) the need for affordable housing within the local jurisdiction, including low- and moderate-income housing; and (2) if applicable, the impacts of gentrification.

The bill's requirement that counties include a "plan" to address the need for affordable housing and the impacts of gentrification is incompatible with the "big picture" nature of a comprehensive plan. It is a visionary document that sets the long-term growth and land use goals of a local government. The plan is general in nature and does not provide the level of detail found in a zoning ordinance, water and sewer plan, or similar document. The bill's provisions are akin to these separate instruments.

Additionally, comprehensive plans are typically updated every 10 years and the update process is both costly and time-consuming. The bill would require a county to undertake an onerous amendment process to comply with the bill's requirements. All counties currently address housing issues in a manner that works best for them.

HB 1045 would require an expensive and potentially unnecessary new comprehensive plan element that is too specific and too subject to short-term change to include in a plan. Counties should be able to address gentrification and affordable housing issues in the manner that is most applicable and efficient for them. That may not be in a comprehensive plan. Accordingly, MACo requests the Committee give HB 1045 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.