



House Bill 1119

Board of Electricians - Licensing and Regulation of Electricians - Phase Out of Local Licenses

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 4, 2014

From: Robin Clark

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** House Bill 1119. HB 1119 would establish a statewide electrician licensing program and a state board of electricians, while prohibiting all local electrical boards from issuing licenses after 2019. The bill would also require each county to enforce the State electrical code, or a more stringent code. A county will only be allowed to enforce the electrical code within its jurisdiction if the State finds that the county is adequately doing so. This bill creates eligibility and standards for certain types of electrical licenses and removes the ability of a local jurisdiction to provide a reciprocal license based on another local license.

This bill does not reflect the conclusions of the Task Force to Study Licensing and Continuing Education Requirements for Electricians in Maryland

This past year, the Task Force to Study Licensing and Continuing Education Requirements for Electricians in Maryland (“the Task Force”) convened to study licensing and continuing education requirements for electricians in Maryland, pursuant to Chapter 579 of 2013. During the September 19 meeting of the Task Force, John Barr, MACo’s representative to the Task Force, motioned “to allow local jurisdictions the authority to implement due process for complaints and discipline and . . . restrict or suspend the license holder’s right to perform electrical services in that jurisdiction and . . . refer the restrictions to the State board for review and possible statewide action,” as described in the minutes of the Task Force for that date. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion, according to the official minutes.

This legislation does not reflect the unanimous conclusion of the Task Force that it is necessary to preserve the authority of local jurisdictions to discipline and restrict or suspend the license holder’s right to perform electrical services. In fact, the legislation removes the ability of local electrical boards to enforce electrical codes. By prohibiting local electrical boards from issuing local licenses, the legislation deprives local electrical boards of resources needed for proper enforcement. Also, the elimination of local licenses negates the ability of

local electrical boards to enforce codes through restricting or suspending local licenses. Finally, the legislation does not create any ability for local jurisdictions to restrict or suspend a state license holder's rights to perform electrical services within their jurisdiction.

In this way, HB 1119 completely contradicts the stated and unanimous intent of the Task Force to Study Licensing and Continuing Education Requirements for Electricians in Maryland: to preserve the ability of a local jurisdiction to restrict or suspend the license holder's right to perform electrical services in that jurisdiction.

This bill threatens safety of our citizens by removing the ability of counties to enforce electrical codes within their jurisdictions

Local electrical boards have been effective mechanisms for protecting the safety of our residents. Local electrical boards currently test and license electricians, perform disciplinary actions, and administer continuing education programs. While county governments are willing to discuss moving to a uniform electrical code statewide, creating uniform continuing education requirements, and refining and limiting the types of licenses that may be obtained in Maryland, we have serious concerns about relinquishing all authority over electrical work performed within our county lines.

Local electrical boards are best situated to oversee and discipline electricians working in our counties, and they have been effectively doing so for many years. Without strong local oversight and disciplinary authority, the safety of the citizens of Maryland may be threatened. There are ways to create a more unified system of electrician licensing in Maryland without undermining the positive work of local electrical boards.

MACo encourages the Committee to consider a system in which local electrical boards are authorized to issue licenses and authorized to remove the ability of an electrician to practice within its jurisdiction when he or she violates local code. Increased uniformity of licenses, electrical codes, and continuing education could still be achieved within such a system. The centralization of sole oversight and disciplinary authority in one statewide body, as envisaged in this bill, is not necessary to achieve the aims of the Task Force, and could create undue harm to our residents.

For these reasons, MACo recommends the Committee issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 1119.