



House Bill 1278

*Public Health – Health Care Facilities and Health Care Systems –
Availability of Buprenorphine Prescribers*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
with AMENDMENTS

Date: March 7, 2016

To: Health and Government Operations
Committee

From: Natasha Mehu & Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1278 **with AMENDMENTS**. MACo worked closely with the bill sponsors and other stakeholders to develop amendment language that would help expand patient access to opioid addiction medications without putting onerous requirements on the providers and healthcare facilities.

As originally introduced, HB 1278 set a burdensome and difficult to meet mandate on certain health care facilities, including local health departments, to have at least one buprenorphine provider available for every 100 patients served.

As amended, HB 1278 would require certain health care facilities to ensure their patients have access to the services of healthcare providers that are trained and authorized to prescribe opioid addiction medications, including buprenorphine-containing formulas. To comply with this directive, the facilities have the flexibility to directly employ, contract with, or refer to the appropriate providers. The facilities would not have to meet a threshold of one provider for 100 patients.

These amendments ensure that patients could have access to a broader range of providers and opioid addiction medications, not just buprenorphine. Additionally, rather than set a specific mandate for the facilities to make the providers available, the amendments provide the flexibility for a facility to do so in a way that meets their needs and available resources. It also authorizes the facilities to deliver these services through telehealth.

MACo believes the amended language reasonably expands access to opioid addiction medication providers without setting unreasonable mandates on health care facilities. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE with AMENDMENTS** report on HB 1278.