



House Bill 1326

Maryland Healthy Working Families Act - Revisions and Public Health Emergency Leave

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 2, 2021

From: Drew Jabin

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1326. This bill would place significant costs on local jurisdictions as a result of paying for additional leave required during a public health emergency.

Under state law, counties would have no choice but to fund these mandated changes to the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act—competing for limited local funds against school construction, public safety, roadway maintenance, and other essential public services.

Public sector employees include individuals like health officers, 9-1-1 operators, public safety personnel, and other front-line government staff who keep local services running for the health and safety of Maryland’s communities. They are essential at all times, but never more so than during a public health emergency, as the COVID-19 crisis has made abundantly clear. Effective local government response to an emergency is dependent on being fully staffed. HB 1326 would require employers to offer an **additional** 112 hours of sick and safe leave per employee during a public health emergency, when public sector employees are most needed to serve their communities.

Additionally, removing the length of service requirement will mean more employees qualify for this benefit adding yet another extraordinary fiscal hit. Furthermore, the removal of the on-call provision for eligibility will be difficult to implement as many on-call employees serve as back up for employees that are already out on paid leave.

This legislation does not appropriately balance the goals of helping employees with the economic realities that counties are facing, and accordingly, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 1326 and requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report.