



House Bill 1406

Land Use - Development - Middle Housing (Modest Home Choices Act of 2020)

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: March 4, 2020

From: Alex Butler

The Maryland Association of Counties **OPPOSES** HB 1406 as it would force all counties to arbitrarily amend their comprehensive zoning plans.

Generally, the State of Maryland has granted local land use autonomy to county government. Housing affordability is a nationwide issue that merits careful consideration. While MACo appreciates the approach of establishing certain criteria, HB 1406 would apply a one-size-fits-all approach that will not directly address housing affordability across the state. One narrowly-crafted vision, created with an eye toward a certain metropolitan area and its specific challenges, simply cannot become the skeleton key to resolve housing concerns in neighborhoods of every size and character across the state.

Some of the biggest affordable housing shortages are in rural jurisdictions where zoning is not the driving factor. Housing costs are on the rise due to continual upgrades in construction requirements such as mandatory sprinklers, certain septic systems that may require “best available” technology, building code enhancements, and energy efficiency enhancements. While these can often lead to efficiencies later, they collectively contribute to the upfront costs of housing.

Amending comprehensive plans are lengthy processes that require community input and significant effort by local jurisdictions. Last year, with the passage of HB 1045, there is a “housing element” required by state law to be included in local comprehensive plans. MACo supports rational, planned approaches to expanding affordable housing, but does not support the inflexible mandates in HB 1406. For these reasons, MACo requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 1406.