



House Bill 1471

State Board of Plumbing – State Plumbing Code – Adoption and Enforcement

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

Date: March 15, 2016

To: Economic Matters Committee

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr. & Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1471. The bill would limit local autonomy and does not address any systemic problem or weakness with the State's current plumbing code system.

HB 1471 requires the State Board of Plumbing to adopt the National Standard Plumbing Code (NSPC) as the State Plumbing Code. The bill repeals the authority of a county to adopt a local plumbing code in lieu of the State Code and limits a county to amend the State Code in ways that are specific to a local area's soil, water, or typical seasonal conditions. A local amendment would be subject to approval by the State Board.

Currently, the State Board has adopted the National Standard Plumbing Code (NSPC) as the State Code but may choose to adopt another standardized code, such as the International Plumbing Code (IPC) as it sees fit. Counties may either adopt the State Code or adopt a local code that is equal to or more stringent than the State Code. Fourteen counties use the NSPC or an amended variant, while 10 have adopted the IPC or an amended variant.

This bill is unnecessary. There are no systemic issues with either the implementation or enforcement of the State Plumbing Code or local plumbing codes. The State Board has the authority to amend or adopt a new code as needed. The current system works and allows for adequate local flexibility to adopt a code that best meets their local conditions and needs while still ensuring safe and functioning plumbing systems.

HB 1471 would force counties to adopt the NSPC when there is no need and removes their authority to adopt a local plumbing code. This reduces local autonomy and, as the fiscal note indicates, will have a meaningful cost on those counties that currently use the IPC – they must adopt the NSPC and retrain their code enforcement personnel. HB 1471 is unnecessary and would reduce local autonomy. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 1471 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.