



House Bill 1577

Human Services – Family Navigation Services – Provision and Funding

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: February 27, 2018

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1577. While well-intended, it would effectively carve out a portion of Local Management Board (LMB) funding for one specified program, consequently reducing their resources for all other programs and undermining their community-based decision-making authority.

LMBs are found in each county and Baltimore City. They are responsible for coordinating the collaboration of child and family service agencies and providers – identifying local needs and targeting resources – for their jurisdictions. These services include family navigators, which some LMBs have been choosing to fund out of their budgets based on the needs of their communities. The program established in HB 1577 raises local concerns that the funding for family navigators would be “carved-out” of the LMB budgets.

HB 1577 would formally establish and “fence off” a Family Navigator Services program under LMBs. The bill requires the governor to fund the program annually at no less than \$1,665,915. The funds are to be provided to the LMBs through the Governor’s Office for Children. LMBs would have the ability to decide whether to accept the funds and if they do accept to determine which family navigators to fund.

Counties are concerned that the governor’s budget for LMBs in future years would be reduced equivalent to the required funding for the Family Navigator Services program. The funding level set in the bill corresponds to the amount of money LMBs have collectively spent on family navigators in past years. Rather than creating a new source of funding it could have the effect of fencing off existing funding for a select program. Not only would this reduce LMBs’ funding overall, it would undermine their authority for determining which programs and services within their purview warrant funding from their budgets. This runs counter to the entire “community based” LMB principle.

HB 1577 would have the unintended consequences of reducing funding for LMBs, and restricting their ability to fund other programs and appropriately target resources for the needs of their communities. For these reasons, MACo urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 1577.