



House Bill 1594

Economic Development - More Jobs for Marylanders - Tier I Eligibility

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: March 7, 2018

From: Barbara Zektick

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1594. This bill generally expands access to State economic development benefits under the More Jobs for Marylanders Program to geographical areas sharing a zip code with areas that currently qualify.

Local governments, just as the State, have a vested interest in economic development. Local economic growth creates jobs and increases salaries, expanding the tax base both locally and statewide. Counties promote economic development through their own programs and coordinate with the State to attract and retain businesses where most beneficial to our economy.

Counties understand and respect that the State has a policy interest in designating certain areas as targets for economic incentives. That said, MACo generally supports legislative initiatives which promote greater access to economic development incentives, as well as access based upon designated geographical regions other than county boundaries. While most counties are not “qualified distressed” or “Tier 1” counties, most have at least some communities that suffer from disinvestment. While designating certain counties as targeted “qualified distressed counties” clearly has merit, it is imperfect in that it fails to account for distressed areas within other counties which could also significantly benefit from targeted programs.

SB 1594 offers a reasonable recognition that a “distressed area” may not strictly be confined within political boundaries, and creates some flexibility in targeting them in distressed areas spilling across county lines. For these reasons, MACo requests the Committee **SUPPORT** SB 1594.