



House Bill 1651

Local Jurisdictions – Housing – Sustainable Communities – Comprehensive Plans

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: March 6, 2018

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1651 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. The bill would create an unnecessary new mandate for local comprehensive plans.

HB 1651 requires a local comprehensive plan to include a housing element that addresses: (1) the impacts and risks for gentrification; and (2) the demand for affordable housing, including an inventory for affordable housing. The bill also adds gentrification and affordable housing issues to the list of criteria that the Smart Growth Subcabinet may consider when making a Sustainable Communities designation.

MACo has no issue with including gentrification and affordable housing issues as additional Sustainable Communities criteria. However, MACo is opposed to the mandatory comprehensive plan element.

A comprehensive plan is both time consuming and expensive to create and update. It is a visionary document that sets the long-term growth and land use goals of a county or municipal corporation. A comprehensive plan is reviewed, and if necessary, updated, on a 10-year cycle. The plan is general in nature and does not provide the level of detail found in a zoning ordinance, water and sewer plan, or similar document.

All counties address housing issues in a way that best meets their needs. A county may already include housing information or an actual housing element in its comprehensive plan. However, information regarding localized gentrification issues or an affordable housing survey is likely too specific for a plan dealing in generalities. Additionally, an actual affordable housing survey may not remain valid for 10 years, potentially requiring the plan to be opened up to the time-consuming and onerous amendment process.

HB 1651 would require an expensive and potentially unnecessary new comprehensive plan element that is too specific and subject to short-term change to include in a plan. Counties should be able to address gentrification and affordable housing issues in the manner that is most applicable and efficient for them. That may not be in a comprehensive plan. Accordingly, MACo requests the Committee give HB 1651 a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** removing the compulsory plan element.

(see next page for MACo's proposed amendments)

MACo PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HB 1651

Amendment No. 1

On page 1, in line 2, strike beginning with the third dash down through “Plans” in line 3; strike beginning with “expanding” in line 7 down through “plan;” in line 10; and strike lines 16 through 25, inclusive.

Amendment No. 2

Strike beginning with “Article” in line 9 on page 3 down through “HOUSING.” in line 10 on page 5, inclusive.