



Senate Bill 230

Maryland Port Administration – Land Acquisition and Payment to Counties

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Finance Committee

Date: January 19, 2021

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 230. This bill would set an unreasonable timeframe for local governments to review and respond to property acquisition requests from the Maryland Port Administration and needlessly undercut the terms of payment in lieu of taxes agreements between the State and county governments.

Land use and zoning are central components of local authority under Maryland law – serving as the essential means for community input. Under current law, local governments have 90 days to respond to the Maryland Port Administration before a request to acquire property is deemed granted. By cutting that timeframe to just 30 days, this bill would undermine local processes and preclude public input.

County governments depend on property tax revenue to support state-mandated spending, and for the delivery of core services upon which all county residents depend. Because properties used in conjunction with cargo handling facilities is generally exempt from property taxes, the State may provide payments in lieu of taxes to help offset losses in local tax revenue. By limiting such agreements to three years, this bill could undermine county revenue structures and support for schools, public health, public safety, and other essential community services.

In general, MACo stands for local self-determination. Counties, led by their elected leaders who are directly accountable within the community, are in the best position to make decisions on local affairs – ranging from land use to budget priorities. MACo steadfastly guards this local autonomy, and frequently advocates against statewide solutions that mandate county compliance or otherwise override local decision-making.

Counties stand ready to work with state policymakers to develop flexible and optional tools to incentivize economic development, but resist state-mandated changes that preclude local input. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 230 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.