



Senate Bill 653

Maryland Income Tax Refunds – Warrant Intercept Program

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways & Means Committee

Date: March 18, 2014

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 653. This bill would authorize each county to submit information to the Comptroller to pursue a tax refund intercept program targeting individuals with certain outstanding warrants.

MACo opposed the bill as originally introduced as it would have required each county to participate in the tax refund intercept program. While the public safety goals were laudable, MACo believed that a statewide tax refund intercept program for all jurisdictions was premature. The “pilot” in Anne Arundel County, with its many particular details, was clearly fashioned around the scope, staff capacity, technology, and other specifics of that jurisdiction’s law enforcement units. The successes of that pilot may be attributable, in part, to its tailoring to the needs and capabilities of the host county.

MACo suggested that a path forward on this issue would be to engage both local law enforcement and elected officials to craft an “opt-in” program that would allow suitable definition and implementation by each jurisdiction. The Senate has adopted amendments for SB 653 that would create a local opt-in rather than a mandate to participate in the program. This approach could help counties guide the range of warrants appropriate to trigger interception. It could also help determine whether program implementation is best handled by law enforcement units either within county government or under a sheriff, as well as who should interface with the Office of the Comptroller. It would allow the counties flexibility in managing the range of other potential issues arising from a statewide option.

MACo supports the bill as amended by the Senate to provide a local option to participate in a tax refund intercept program across each jurisdiction. MACo believes this more locally-responsive, optional program would offer the best chance for such an effort to succeed. For these reasons, MACo respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 653.