



## Senate Bill 781

*Environment – Recycling – Public and Commercial Buildings, Special Events, and Single-Family Residences*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Date: February 25, 2014

From: Leslie Knapp Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** Senate Bill 781. The bill would require counties to incorporate new and potentially costly recycling requirements into county recycling plans and create new enforcement requirements for county governments without providing commensurate State resources to help enact such changes.

Unlike most other states, Maryland requires the counties to administer recycling programs and reach certain recycling goals. Despite originally being an unfunded mandate from the State, counties have supported recycling and now Maryland ranks above average among recycling states. Both MACo and the counties are committed to recycling.

Additionally, recycling is a primary component of the zero waste concept, which MACo also believes is worthy of consideration. While MACo supports recycling and has previously supported or not opposed certain recycling legislation, MACo has opposed recycling bills that would impose new and potentially costly mandates on county governments rather than have the affected stakeholders work collaboratively to create achievable recycling goals. SB 781 would impose such mandates.

MACo understands that the bill's sponsor will offer amendments to remove the bill's requirements regarding single-stream curbside recycling for all single-family residences by October 1, 2016. While MACo appreciates the removal of the curbside pick-up mandate (which would place an economically unrealistic model on all parts of the state), SB 781 still imposes significant new recycling requirements for both special events and commercial buildings.

MACo supports the basic concepts in SB 781 of increased special event and commercial recycling – fairly identifying that there is more to solid waste stream than merely residential pickups. However, the bill does not consider the administrative, cost, and enforcement challenges created by the new mandates or the existing capabilities of different regions throughout Maryland to achieve those mandates.

MACo has received direction from its Land Use Subcommittee, which is part of MACo's decision-making body and considers environmental issues such as recycling, to reach out to key stakeholders over the 2014 interim to work on five key policy areas to improve recycling efforts. The areas include: (1) composting of yard and food waste; (2) consideration of emerging gasification technology; (3) special event recycling; (4) commercial and retail recycling; and (5) improved coordination and recycling reporting with municipalities, higher education institutions, and other major institutions. MACo has already made preliminary inquiries to the Maryland Department of the Environment, the waste haulers, and zero waste and recycling advocacy groups and has received favorable responses.

MACo supports the underlying goals of SB 781 with respect to commercial and special event recycling. However, the bill imposes new recycling and enforcement requirements on county governments without any resources or assistance to implement and meet those new requirements. MACo believes that a more prudent approach would be to bring the appropriate stakeholders together over the 2014 interim and craft a collaborative and realistic approach to special event and commercial recycling challenges. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 781 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.