



Senate Bill 1055

State Aid for Critical Services – County Maintenance of Effort Requirements

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: March 20, 2013

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 1055. This bill would require counties to maintain funding levels year to year across a wide variety of services labeled in the bill as “critical.”

Counties agree about the essential nature of the locally-delivered services described in the bill. MACo shares concern with the stresses that numerous State actions have placed onto non-education segments of county budgets. However, the rigid bill requirements of SB 1055 would unreasonably trump decision-making authority for county officials.

Effectively, SB 1055 would unfairly substitute a blanket State policy for the judgment of the county officials who are elected by, and accountable to, the county’s taxpayers and residents. By placing the overwhelming share of the county budget under a rigid State mandate, the role of county elected officials becomes unfairly marginalized.

Further, SB 1055 allows no flexibility for fiscal circumstances that call for true judgment. The bill’s fiscal note looks at FY 2010-11 -- a time period dominated by a real estate free fall, and numerous State cutbacks (including many to these very “critical” functions). Counties were forced during these times to effect employee layoffs and furloughs and overall service abridgement. SB 1055 would even deny flexibility to reallocate local resources to best respond to State aid reductions.

MACo is extremely concerned with the precedent this legislation would set and the severe limits this legislation would place on a county’s autonomy to manage its budget. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 1055.