



**House Bill 1274**  
*Opioid Restitution Fund*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 27, 2019

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1274 as it would protect and direct the use of monetary damages awarded to the State from litigation pursued against the opioid industry for violations of state law. It is imperative that money from such litigation efforts go directly toward tackling this deadly epidemic.

As the opioid crisis continues to keep our communities within its grip, state and local officials have turned to the courts to hold opioid manufacturers and industry members accountable for the role they have played in creating and sustaining this crisis. In many ways, these efforts mirror those successfully pursued decades ago against tobacco manufacturers. In fact, the Opioid Restitution Fund created by HB 1274 is modeled after the Cigarette Restitution Fund. Its framework is shaped from lessons learned since the establishment of the cigarette fund.

HB 1274 would require that any monetary judgements or settlements the State wins in state or federal court against opioid manufacturers and industry members is deposited into a dedicated fund used explicitly for the purposes of addressing the opioid crisis. The money would fund critical opioid-related programs and services such as improving access to medications for the treatment of substance use disorders and reversal of overdoses; expanding access to treatment beds at all levels; increasing availability of crisis response systems and centers; organizing and implementing education campaigns within primary and secondary schools; and reaching out to high risk populations. Importantly, the money expended from the fund is supplemental to—and does not supplant—funding currently provided for these services. And as amended by the House, the money may be used in certain circumstances to cover associated administrative expenses.

Given the scope of the epidemic and the difficulties communities face tackling it, it is imperative that money from litigation efforts provide communities with much needed resources to meet their treatment, education, and enforcement needs. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1274.