



House Bill 880

Environment - Impact of Actions on Climate, Labor, and Environmental Justice

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation and
Economic Matters Committees

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From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) OPPOSES HB 880. The bill prohibits all county governments from taking very widely defined actions unless the county has conducted detailed evaluations and assessments of the impact of the action on the climate, labor and employment, environmental justice, and any overburdened community.

HB 880 is introduced with the noble goal of ensuring county actions are both socially and environmentally well considered. Counties recognize and support their role in ensuring that Maryland maintains a socially and ecologically healthy environment. Many counties use a variety of metrics and data points when deciding policy and implementation. While counties do recognize the intent of HB 880, this legislation would prove to be immensely problematic for even routine local government operations.

If passed, the implementation of the reporting requirements under HB 880 would effectively serve to slow the actions of county government, if not grind them to a halt. Requiring reports for nearly any action can substantially add to project costs and divert resources away from communities that need them most. The specific standards under the bill could trigger avenues for litigation or challenges to nearly any county function – creating grave cost and timing concerns as counties seek to serve residents effectively. Furthermore, requiring additional voluminous reports to be conducted based on the original report's findings would create further delay and backlog.

The State's Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities may be available as a resource to tackle some of the concerns raised in HB 880 as its broad stakeholder approach to matters of environmental justice largely aligns with the goals of this bill.

Counties are accountable for their decision-making and have established processes for evaluating consequential actions. HB 880 would slow the progress of the very goal it wishes to achieve by imposing unnecessary and resource-consuming administrative burdens on county governments who are already diligently addressing these processes within their own jurisdictions. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report for HB 880.