



House Bill 1446

Railroads - Safety Requirements (Maryland Railway Safety Act of 2024)

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

Date: March 7, 2024

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1446 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill generally addresses railroad safety in Maryland, including strengthening requirements governing railroads' provision of hazardous materials information to state and federal emergency management officials.

Providing local emergency managers with access to accurate and up-to-date information about hazardous materials shipments on trains is a matter of public safety and a fundamental responsibility of government to protect its residents. As such, MACo requests an amendment to ensure rail hazmat information is available to the appropriate federal, state, and county emergency management officials.

Every day, trains crisscross Maryland communities, transporting goods essential to the state and regional economy. Among these goods are hazardous materials that, if mishandled or involved in an accident, pose significant risks to public safety, property, and the environment. From flammable liquids to toxic gases, the potential hazards are manifold, and the consequences of an incident can be catastrophic.

HB 1446 requires the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to establish and maintain a database on hazardous materials and waste moving by rail in Maryland. Under the bill, the Commissioner must make the information available to the Maryland Department of Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Local emergency managers are the first line of defense in mitigating and responding to emergencies within our communities. However, without comprehensive information on hazardous materials and waste moving through their jurisdictions, county emergency managers' ability to effectively prepare for and respond to hazmat-related incidents is severely compromised. Absent this vital knowledge, emergency responders may find themselves ill-prepared to contain spills, evacuate residents, or provide appropriate medical care in the event of an accident.

Ensuring county emergency managers have access to this critical information is essential to safeguarding public safety, enhancing emergency preparedness, and ensuring effective response and recovery efforts in the face of hazardous materials incidents. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 1446.