



House Bill 165

Courts - Sheriffs' Salaries - Alterations

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: February 4, 2026

From: Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES HB 165**. This bill replaces a locally-driven legislative collaboration to properly set salaries for most county sheriffs, with a uniform process pinning that salary to that of the county's state's attorney.

Both sheriffs and state's attorneys are state offices, elected directly by the voters within each political subdivision. However, the duties and responsibilities of these two roles cannot be neatly mapped from one to the other in any standardized way across the many counties affected by HB 165. The bill makes a practical oversight in advancing that mirroring these two salaries could, or should, be that simple.

Sheriffs are tasked in the Maryland constitution with responsibilities for courthouse security, prisoner transport, and service of process. In practice, however, many jurisdictions rely on the sheriff and deputies for primary law enforcement duties in some or all of the county. Further, several Maryland jurisdictions also have the sheriff as the overseer of local correctional facilities, yet another endeavor far broader than the constitutional charge. This variation alone merits careful case-by-case consideration of the proper remuneration for the role of local sheriff.

Further, HB 165 undermines a process that serves local interests by incorporating a county-level evaluation with a General Assembly consideration. The inherently collaborative process embodied in today's system of establishing and reviewing public official salaries, including that for the sheriff as the position with the widest range of duties, has served the public interest well to address both ethics and fairness concerns.

HB 165 upends a productive and collaborative system for public official salaries with a strict one-way system that belies the wide variation in circumstances across the many jurisdictions' sheriffs.

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report for **HB 165**.