



House Bill 1104

Residential Solar Energy Systems - Local Inspections and Permitting

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

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The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1104. This bill would require counties to implement a highly prescriptive “solar permitting software” by August 1, 2027, mandate remote inspections (by recorded video or photograph) for projects permitted through that software, prohibit any manual review at any point in the permitting or inspection process for those projects, cap local permitting and inspection fees, and authorize the Attorney General to pursue judicial enforcement.

Counties support expanding residential solar and have consistently worked to improve permitting and inspection workflows. However, HB 1104 takes a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach that would impose significant costs and operational disruptions, remove practical on-site inspection discretion, and raise safety concerns—while also creating technical requirements that may not align with existing local permitting systems.

Key county concerns include:

Significant And Unfunded Cost Impacts

HB 1104 would require local governments to procure and implement highly specific and technical software that automates plan review, generates code-compliant approvals, accepts online payments, and issues permits immediately upon payment. These changes would likely require new vendor contracts, integration work with existing systems, cybersecurity and records-retention changes, staff training, and ongoing subscription and support costs. At the same time, the bill caps the “solar permitting fee” at \$200. This combination creates a structural mismatch: counties would be required to stand up and maintain a new technical platform while being constrained in their ability to recover the true costs of administering and enforcing the program.

Eliminating In-Person Review And Inspector Discretion

HB 1104 would require inspections for software-permitted projects to be conducted remotely through photos or recorded video, and it prohibits a county from requiring any manual review at any point in the permitting or inspection process under that pathway. In practice, this removes a core safeguard: the ability to require an on-site visit or hands-on verification when conditions warrant it. Residential solar

installations implicate structural and electrical safety. While remote inspections may be workable in straightforward cases, they are not a reliable substitute where visibility is limited, documentation is incomplete, or site conditions are atypical.

Unreasonable Technical Constraints And Interoperability Barriers

Counties operate a variety of permitting and inspection platforms, often integrated across multiple permit types and departments. HB 1104's prescriptive software definition and "immediate issuance" requirements would, in practice, force jurisdictions toward an effectively single-source procurement, with SolarAPP+. While proponents highlight the potential benefits of standardization, multiple jurisdictions have reported that SolarAPP+ does not integrate cleanly with their effective existing systems. For counties, this would likely mean data-management challenges and implementation delays that ultimately undercut the bill's stated efficiency goals.

HB 1104 would mandate costly technology changes, constrain local inspection tools, and replace flexible local administration with rigid statutory requirements and enforcement mechanisms. For these reasons, MACo respectfully urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 1104.