



House Bill 1532

Continuing the Next Generation Energy Act

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Date: March 3, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1532 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill, while largely outside of the purview of county governments, directs the Power Plant Research Program to produce a study on streamlining energy zoning and permitting. County/community input and coordination should be a component of the visioning process in the bill.

The 2025 and 2026 sessions will go down in history as the “Sessions of Energy,” with an unprecedented number of bills debated and enacted to address reliability and utility costs. Last year, one of the most consequential actions was the Renewable Energy Certainty Act (RECA), which sought to provide clearer guardrails for project siting, and to affirm local roles in that process. HB 1532 follows in a long line of high-profile legislation aimed at energy affordability and system planning. While the vast majority of the bill is outside the direct operational scope of county governments, one provision—Section 3 of the uncodified language—does implicate land use, zoning, and permitting authority.

For over a decade, Maryland courts and the General Assembly have made clear that counties are largely preempted on many energy-related matters, particularly utility-scale generation siting. However, that preemption is not absolute, and counties remain the primary level of government responsible for land use and zoning at the community level. MACo requests an amendment to clarify that recommendations on a State-level zoning or permitting structure be developed in consultation with county planning and permitting officials, so the recommendations reflect local comprehensive plans, county infrastructure capacity, and community impacts. Counties urge the following amendment language:

On page 12, in line 10 after “timelines;” insert “(3) coordinate with appropriate local governments in the development of the sites and processes through this Act, to ensure appropriate community input and coordination; and”; and in line 11 strike “(3) and substitute “(4)”.

Counties remain committed to being productive stakeholders in addressing Maryland’s energy needs and look forward to deepening their partnership with the State to meet this moment. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for HB 1532.