



Senate Bill 781

Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: March 3, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 781. The bill establishes new, more stringent regulatory standards for county infrastructure that receive certain state permits.

Maryland is facing a significant housing shortage. In recent sessions, the General Assembly has advanced a broad slate of housing legislation, and in 2026, both the Governor and presiding officers have signaled housing affordability as a top priority. As drafted, SB 781 would move in the opposite direction by adding new constraints that could make it more difficult and more expensive for counties to deliver the public facilities needed to support growth.

SB 781 is broad in application and would impose additional requirements on a wide range of public infrastructure. Practically, this could drive up project costs for facilities development, operation, and expansion, all at a time when infrastructure capacity is already a central challenge for growing communities. Without accompanying resources to meet these heightened standards, the bill could drastically impact public service affordability and realistically diminish the number of projects counties can advance that communities need.

Counties share the State's goal of planning for climate risk and ensuring all Marylanders can enjoy a healthy environment. However, as drafted, SB 781 would undermine counties' ability to deliver timely and cost-effective infrastructure that supports housing affordability and broader community needs. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report for SB 781.