



House Bill 1501

Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Certification

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Economic Matters Committee

WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: March 12, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1501 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill grants the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) broad authority to regulate homeless shelters.

Over the past several legislative sessions, the General Assembly has considered a range of bills that would give DHCD broad discretion over the establishment and operation of homeless shelters. As front-line providers of relief and social services, counties are often central to responding to homelessness and helping vulnerable residents. Counties recognize and generally support the intent of HB 1501. However, as drafted, the bill could impede a county's ability to respond quickly and effectively in emergency situations.

HB 1501's definition of "homeless shelter" includes both "Disaster or Hazard Emergency Shelter" and "Emergency Mass Care Shelter." These shelter types are typically operated by county emergency management agencies and are activated in response to immediate and urgent disasters. Requiring DHCD certification for these emergency shelters would mark a significant departure from established emergency response practices and could delay the deployment of rapid, life-saving services. **Counties therefore request that both "Disaster or Hazard Emergency Shelter" and "Emergency Mass Care Shelter" be excluded from DHCD's licensing regime to avoid unnecessary delays in emergency response.**

Counties appreciate the underlying intent of HB 1501 and remain committed to working with the Committee, the sponsor, DHCD, and other stakeholders to identify ideal pathways to serve Maryland's homeless population. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue HB 1501 a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report.