



## House Bill 695

*Environment – Climate Crisis Plan – Requirement  
(Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022)*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: February 18, 2022

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 695. The bill requires all counties to adopt a broad and unwieldy climate crisis plan, even though counties would not have the ability to implement it.

HB 695 is clearly introduced with the goal of reducing emissions and energy consumption across the public and private sectors. Counties both recognize and support their proper role as players in helping to address and mitigate climate change. In every corner of the state, counties are taking action to reduce emissions and leave a healthy environment for the next generation.

While counties already partner with the State on stewardship responsibilities, HB 695 presumes that the county level is the only tier of government suitable for developing these plans. While counties frequently seek authority and flexibility under state law, a matter as widespread as climate response stretches beyond political boundaries – and has generally been best addressed at the watershed, regional, or larger scope.

Multiple Maryland counties have adopted climate action plans, with varying focus. However, the breadth and scope of the plans envisioned under HB 695 is broader and far more all-encompassing than any amount of authority currently vested in county governing bodies. *The proposed plan includes aspirations to change not only public but private buildings, vehicles, energy systems, and the like.* Mandating each individual county to develop plans for mass transit strains the imagination – as no intra-county system would pass any reasonable cost/benefit analysis.

Requiring these county plans, without any capacity to affect their components, underscores the incorrect placement of these plans at the county level. Counties lack the authority to back up the broad vision of the plans, and almost certainly lack both the expertise and the resources to single-handedly generate a product with the level of detail required under HB 695.

Counties are already taking actions to mitigate climate change, but the framework proposed in HB 695 is not tenable. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report for HB 695.