



Senate Bill 296

Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 14, 2023

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 296. This bill would incentivize owner-occupied units and small private landlords to keep their rental units free of habitability concerns, energy and water efficient, and accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The economic reverberations from the COVID-19 pandemic are still felt in nearly all parts of the economy, but nowhere more so than in the housing market. Due to a variety of historic and economic factors, the production and preservation of affordable housing stock has lagged behind the growth of our society. Today the cost of housing has become a significant line item in many household budgets, far exceeding the longtime standard of 30 percent of gross income.

SB 296 would help to address this preservation deficit by providing owner-occupied units and small landlords with the necessary resources to undertake expensive repairs. For small landlords, this program would lower or eliminate out-of-pocket costs for some repairs, lessening or eliminating the need for expensive rent increases. For owner-occupied units, the program has a similar impact, effectively creating a safety net for families in financially dire situations who cannot afford home repairs.

If enacted, SB 296 would provide a significant tool in preventing homelessness. By allocating resources to keep people in their homes and to preserve affordable housing, the program offers a novel approach targeting one part of the pervasive housing crisis. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 296 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.