



House Bill 407

*Department of Assessments and Taxation –
Salary Incentives for Assessors - Authorization*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Appropriations Committee

Date: February 14, 2023

From: Kevin Kinnally and Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 407. This bill would allow county governments to supplement compensation for state employees in one state agency. While the goal of filling these professional roles is noble, the method of shifting this obligation to county governments would promote unequal service delivery according to each jurisdiction's ability to pay and introduce unwarranted variability in what should be uniform State functions.

Public sector employment is in crisis. Recent workforce trends have left many positions unfilled, and public sector hiring scales uncompetitive. The State, through many years of challenging budgets, has abolished vacant positions and pursued similar, understandable, measures to address fiscal realities. The result has been a wide swath of State agencies facing hiring and retention challenges. County governments face their own similar difficulties in many service areas.

HB 407 seeks to target one small sector of this larger trend – professional assessors employed by the State's Department of Assessment and Taxation. The argument for redoubling commitment to this important function, and the professionals who carry it out, is no doubt a compelling one. The Department deserves heightened attention through the Governor's recently announced workforce initiatives, and other resources through the State budget process.

The method envisioned in HB 407, however, expands beyond the State. Implying that "the answer" to this State personnel challenge lies in county governments advancing local resources represents an unwise and unwarranted solution to this real challenge. Even in the best outcome under HB 407, some counties may be moved to find the resources to make these enhancements (at the immediate expense of local spending priorities like education and public safety), but the result would merely be a patchwork of varying efficacy across our jurisdictions, betraying one of the central tenets of this centralized State function.

HB 407 targets a worrisome issue with State staffing, but its reliance on local resources belies the underlying problem. A Statewide effort to renew support for its employees, in this Department and elsewhere, is the ideal means to advance these goals. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 407 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.