



Senate Bill 14

Economic Development - Tourism Zones - Designation and Benefits

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: January 18, 2024

From: Dom Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 14. This bill is a legislative priority for our sister association, the Maryland Municipal League, and provides municipalities with the ability to designate tourism zones.

The Maryland Department of Commerce reported that in 2022, “More than 43.5 million people visited Maryland... and spent \$19.4 billion, topping pre-pandemic levels...” Tourism is a key driver of economic development for all local governments, whether they be urban, rural, counties, or municipalities. Programs that serve to further this growing industry not only benefit host communities, but also have positive spillover effects in neighboring jurisdictions. While counties may not be explicitly mentioned in the bill, it is undeniable that all local governments are intrinsically linked, and prosperity in one often plants the seeds for prosperity in others.

Additionally, as Maryland emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and into a time of fiscal uncertainty, it is paramount that state leaders work to support local economies and local revenues. The economic health of the communities we call home remains the foundation for responsive state and local governments that can meet the needs of all Marylanders.

Counties fully support the aspirations of SB 14 to help propel local economies and communities. Accordingly, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 14.