



The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Policy Team is the voice of county governments in Annapolis. Each member of the Policy Team specializes in certain policy areas—they can be seen testifying in legislative committees alongside county government elected officials and professionals.

For news and analysis on issues affecting Maryland's county governments and Baltimore City, browse MACo's blog, *Conduit Street* at conduitstreet.mdcounties.org; follow MACo's Twitter feed, [@mdcounties](https://twitter.com/mdcounties); or listen to MACo's *Conduit Street Podcast* at mdcounties.org/podcast.

To check the Association's position on a certain bill, visit MACo's Legislative Tracking Database: mdcounties.org/Legislation.

For additional information about a topic, contact MACo's Policy Team specialists:



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2023 Legislative Initiatives

CENTRALIZED RESOURCES FOR BODY-WORN CAMERAS

State law will soon require body-worn cameras for all law enforcement officers, but advancing this goal remains elusive. Requiring each agency, no matter how small, to create its regime for equipment procurement, footage storage, and redaction policies invites widespread duplication of effort. Moreover, requiring state laws regarding wide-open public access to the footage presents an ominous burden on custodians to carefully redact material to protect victims, families, and witnesses.

MACo advocates for a smoother deployment of this critical technology, including an opt-in State/local partnership for the equipment and services and more balanced rules for releasing body-worn camera footage.

TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION SPENDING

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future phase-in has an advanced interest in more transparent reporting of sources, uses, and outcomes from education investments. Federal relief and rescue funding has compounded the concern of "black box" spending without public clarity.

A statutory directive for additional reporting, a series of inputs to the Blueprint's oversight committee, and a pending new budget-tracking software for school systems present current or near-term opportunities to instill clarity and accountability in school spending.

Reporting and budgeting systems need to ensure that county decision-makers have access to these tools and information to fulfill their fiduciary duties as funding authorities and partners in school success.

ADULT-USE CANNABIS – REVENUE SHARING AND LOCAL OPT-OUT AUTHORITY

The State will take up a multi-pronged regulatory and taxation framework for adult-use cannabis. The legislatively referred constitutional amendment would amend the Maryland Constitution to legalize adult-use recreational cannabis and direct the General Assembly to pass laws for the use, distribution, regulation, and taxation of cannabis.

County governments – who meet regularly year-round and are deeply immersed in the community – are in the best position to manage local affairs. Local decision-makers are elected to serve community needs, their actions are subject to broad constituent and stakeholder input, and they are directly accountable to voters.

As such, any framework must recognize each county's right to opt-out of retail or cultivation within its bounds – consistent with previous legislation introduced in the General Assembly and in most states where adult-use cannabis is legal. Further, any revenue structure placed onto the newly legal products must provide meaningful support for the county governments responsible for the various front-line services most affected by the new laws.

Should the State legalize adult-use cannabis, MACo advocates for the General Assembly to frame implementing legislation with local discretion for facilities and a reasonable local revenue structure to offset local service demands.

VOLUNTEER FIRE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Maryland communities value and rely upon volunteer fire and rescue companies as primary or complementary players in emergency services. Unfortunately, combined fiscal and staffing pressures have many of these organizations on the brink of failure. Experienced firefighters, county fiscal and personnel leaders, and community stakeholders must collaborate to evaluate recruitment tactics, retention benefits, and long-range planning to support and strengthen Maryland's volunteer fire companies.

MACo advocates for a broad stakeholder-driven effort to study and recommend best practices to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters and evaluate options to modernize support for their front-line services.