



BILL NO.: House Bill 111
TITLE: Charter Counties – Local Laws – Digital Copies
POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**
DATE: February 4, 2010
COMMITTEE: Environmental Matters
CONTACT: Leslie Knapp Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 111 **WITH AMENDMENTS** to extend its provisions to all county governments. The bill as drafted authorizes charter counties to provide a digital copy, rather than paper copies, of its compiled laws and any compilation of its public local laws. The bill also reduces the number of copies, from four to one, of compiled laws that a charter county must provide to the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) and provides that the copy may either be in digital or printed form.

Under current law, counties must annually provide a printed copy of its compiled laws to the State Archives, State Law Library, and to each member of the legislative delegation of the county. It must also provide four printed copies to DLS. Additionally, counties must also provide a printed compilation of its public local laws to the State Archives, State Law Library, and five copies to DLS. The bill does not alter the penalty if a county fails to provide the appropriate copy of its compiled laws.

While HB 111 is drafted to affect the charter counties under Article 25A of the Code, MACo believes that this same flexibility and efficiency would be appropriate for all county governments facing this same mandate. MACo would be pleased to develop amendment language to broaden the bill's provisions to all counties, and supports such a change.

HB 111 will replace antiquated references to paper copies of these costly and cumbersome documents, while still achieving the worthy policy goals of public access and archival preservation. Printing its laws and public local laws can cost thousands of dollars and many counties only produce printed copies to comply with the current State law. All counties except Somerset now post their codes online (See www.mdcountries.org/links under "County Codes on Line") and are able to provide digital copies of both their compiled laws and public local laws. Somerset County will be posting their code online by the end of 2010.

HB 111 seeks to modernize outdated sections of the law by allowing the use of digital instead of printed copies, which is now a standard and widely accepted practice. The bill promotes a more efficient government, and would result in a fiscal savings for some counties. Accordingly, MACo recommends the Committee issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 111, extending the same flexibility to all county governments.