



September 21, 2016

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Governor of Maryland  
State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

Thank you again for joining MACo at our Winter Conference in December and at the Summer Conference in August. We felt that your visible presence, and that of your leadership team at both conferences, added a great deal of value to these important and very worthwhile events for countless county leaders. We always welcome your participation, and your insights.

During the Summer Conference, I mentioned that I had accomplished one of my major goals for my term as MACo President – to visit each jurisdiction before the conference. You indicated an interest in learning more about what we have heard in our county-by-county outreach to every corner of the state, so I wanted to share some of that in this letter.

### ***Local Roads***

It comes as no surprise to us – nor to you, I’m sure – that roadways and infrastructure remain a top concern for counties in every part of the state. Restoring the historic share of state funding – the essential lifeblood of local roadway programs – has been a MACo top priority for years.

As we visited with county officials from every jurisdiction, many indicated that they have had positive conversations with their own delegations. A wide swath of Senators and Delegates from both parties would agree that the devastating cutbacks to local road funding – even if temporarily needed to resolve the budget emergency – went too far and have lasted too long.

The longer the state funding for local roadways remains stuck, the worse our road conditions get. In Washington County, we have engaged in the expedient practice of “tar and chip” on local roads in urgent need of repairs. We simply don’t have the funding to do a proper resurfacing, when funding remains at less than 10% of its historic levels.

Across the state, this same anecdote came up time and time again – counties everywhere simply cannot keep up with proper maintenance at these historically low funding levels.

MACo welcomes and appreciates your continued interest in local road and bridge funding. Your willingness to introduce legislation to phase-in restored funding was a bold but appropriate effort – and even since the bill’s failure, you have remained engaged. We hope that your FY 2017 budget

will include the scheduled phase-in of local roadway funding – and we readily accept your challenge to continue this effort before the General Assembly. We hope that this issue can get past the regional, political, and practical obstacles that have stalled a much needed restoration.

Nobody wants driver safety, vehicle wear-and-tear, and pedestrian access to be the victims of budget cuts forced by the “great recession.” We need to insist on a permanent fix.

### ***Infrastructure***

Along similar lines, many counties related concerns with their public infrastructure. School buildings, water systems, and other public facilities have all been squeezed by a sluggish economy and state cost shifts. We know that you have championed proper upkeep of school buildings during the Board of Public Works deliberations – and many county leaders would applaud this direction and focus.

While county governments do not have the authority to direct school spending at that level, many jurisdictions raise these issues with deep interest. And while Maryland has yet to face a human crisis on the scale of Flint, Michigan, we are aware of the urgent needs of our essential, but aging, infrastructure for water, wastewater, and related utility services.

### ***Cross-Border Issues***

As we traveled to visit the manor corners of this beautiful state, it became very clear to me how important our state geography is. Our small state stretches across lengthy state borders – and that matters substantially for policy issues here at home.

In Washington County, we are very aware of cross-border pressures that face our businesses and services. At its narrow point, the county spans less than two miles from the West Virginia and Pennsylvania borders. Employers, homebuilders, and civic organizations must routinely be aware of out-of-state competition as they make decisions in the area.

These issues arise in every part of Maryland. We compete for residents and businesses with surrounding states who offer a dramatically different mix of taxes, regulations, labor standards, and quality-of-life offerings. We are uniformly proud of Maryland, and want to see the state succeed.

On the Eastern Shore, competition with nearby Delaware drives much of the regional economy. Some of the most startling stories we heard while visiting with rural counties were regarding housing permits – as a proxy for residential attractiveness. Even during a fairly sluggish economy post-recession, the shore counties had some signs of life. But when the state layered on several new costly mandates and regulations – most notably requiring high-end septic and sprinkler systems – these housing starts have fallen to nearly zero. The general demand for housing in rural areas is globally unchanged, but Maryland is seemingly losing these residences to Delaware, where homeowners can still avail themselves of nearby Maryland benefits, but make their own decisions regarding housing style and amenities.

The specifics of cross-border competition vary. The suburban Washington area faces transportation challenges that create a dire quality-of-life concern in competition with nearby Virginia and District areas. Mountainous Garrett and Allegany counties compete with the immediate Appalachian

region for development opportunities. The City of Baltimore faces challenges as a tourist and shipping destination from other Eastern Seaboard locations near and far.

One area of sharpest concern is nearby states that pursue different priorities than Maryland. As Maryland envelops the Chesapeake Bay, our state has made a great effort toward its water quality and nutrient removal. Unfortunately, without comparable commitment by surrounding states within the Bay watershed, Maryland simply places itself at a competitive disadvantage with our own neighboring states. Through multistate compacts and other interjurisdictional agreements, we need to ensure that Maryland is not bearing an undue share of these critical responsibilities.

### *Open and Early Communication*

Even before your swearing-in as Governor, you made it a priority to reach out to county leaders. This outreach, and the continued dialogue and fellowship you have promoted, can only do us all good.

We are glad to see that connection last and appear at our conferences and events. The Administration presence was tremendous and welcome at our latest conferences – and that adds to the collegiality our elected officials feel with their partners in state government.

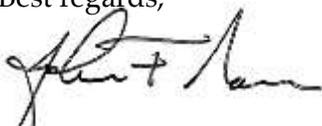
The MACo staff also echoes this sentiment in Annapolis. Whether on a specific issue, or simply maintaining close contact, an open door on both sides of our relationship stands to benefit our collective interests. Let's keep that a priority, especially during the fast-moving stretches of the General Assembly session.

It has been a great honor, and a personal pleasure, to serve as MACo president this year. One of the great privileges that has afforded me has been an avenue to get to know you, and to seize on ways to work together for all Marylanders. I know that partnership – both at the personal level, and at the larger state-and-county level – will mean better outcomes for the residents we all represent.

Attached herewith are the MACo scheduled visits and a separate personal note on behalf of Washington County.

We look forward to continuing our work together.

Best regards,



John F. Barr  
President, MACo  
Commissioner, Washington County