



SENATE BILL 170

County Board of Health – Meetings and Fee-Setting Powers

February 4, 2009

POSITION: Support with Amendment

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the members of the *Restaurant Association of Maryland*, we support Senate Bill 170, but request that the bill be amended to restrict annual license fee increases to 25 percent.

We certainly understand the burden that current law places on local health departments by limiting foodservice facility annual license fees to \$300. In most cases, the fee does not cover the actual costs of enforcement responsibilities. However, we are concerned that this legislation could result in a significant jump in license fees for our members at a time when many are struggling to make ends meet.

When Anne Arundel County was exempted from the fee limit last year, the annual license fee for a High-Priority Foodservice Facility jumped from \$300 to \$590. That is a nearly 97% increase! We worry that similar rates of increases will result if this legislation passes in its current form.

To help mitigate the impact on businesses, we propose that the bill be amended to restrict annual license fee increases to no more than 25 percent. Such a compromise allows local health departments to set more suitable license fees, but to do so incrementally.

We hope that this Committee will support such an amendment and give SB 170 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs and Public Policy
Restaurant Association of Maryland
6301 Hillside Court
Columbia, MD 21046
410-290-6800