



House Bill 243

Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service – Study and Extension

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
with AMENDMENTS

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: February 1, 2018

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 243 with AMENDMENTS**. The Task Force being extended by HB 243 has made valuable progress studying access to service in specified unserved and underserved areas of the state. It should be extended to let the results of the work truly come to fruition. Additionally, MACo requests that the range of geographic areas studied should be expanded to include rural areas in all counties of the state.

MACo believes that access to affordable internet, broadband, wireless, and cellular services is an essential component of a county's economic development and the socio-economic advancements of its residents. Residents benefit from increased economic growth, improved labor market access and outcomes, access to better health care, enhanced civic participation, enriched education opportunities, improved quality of life, and overall competitive and vibrant communities.

Addressing gaps in access and availability to these services transcends the specified regions of the bill and impacts resident living in rural areas of urban counties as well. MACo seeks amendments to ensure that the rural areas of all counties are afforded the same review and benefits of study.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE with AMENDMENTS** report on HB 243.

AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 22, and on page 2 in lines 1, 3 and 4, and page 3 in lines 12, 13, 15, 16, in each instance strike "Western Maryland counties, Southern Maryland counties, Eastern Shore counties, and Frederick, Carroll, and Harford counties" and substitute "**RURAL AREAS OF MARYLAND COUNTIES.**"

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, in line 8, and on page 3, in line 20, in each instance before "**AREAS**" insert "**RURAL**".

AMENDMENT NO. 3

On page 2, in line 8, and on page 3, in line 20, in each instance strike beginning with "**WESTERN**" and ending with "**HARFORD**" and substitute "**MARYLAND**".