



**MARYLAND**  
*Association of*  
**COUNTIES**

## **House Bill 243**

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

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 22, 2018

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 243**. The task force 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. As amended by the House, the range of geographic areas studied has been appropriately 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 for 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 residents living in rural areas of urban counties as well. As amended, the bill ensures that the rural areas of all counties are afforded the same review and benefits of the extended study. For these reasons MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 243.