



House Bill 961

Department of Information Technology – Rural Broadband Service – Inventory and Mapping of Assets

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
with Amendments

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: February 22, 2018

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 961 with AMENDMENTS**. The inventory and mapping of assets required under the bill is key for advancing broadband service in rural areas of the state. MACo requests that the range of geographic areas to be inventoried and mapped 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.

HB 961 would require the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to complete an inventory of state and local government assets by October 1, 2019. The inventory would then be used to create a map that includes all assets. However, it will only include population density and business density for unserved and underserved areas in *specified areas* of the state. MACo requests an amendment to ensure that the rural areas of all counties—rather than just specified areas—will be included comprehensively in this inventory.

MACo encourages steps toward advancing broadband service for all areas of our state. To ensure that the rural areas of all counties are afforded the same review and benefits of the inventory and mapping required in this bill, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for HB 961.

AMENDMENT

On page 1, in line 15, and on page 2 in lines 6-7 and 9-11, 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.**”