



## House Bill 961

*Department of Housing and Community Development – Rural Broadband Service –  
Inventory and Mapping of Assets*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 28, 2018

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 961**. The inventory and mapping of assets required under the bill is key for advancing broadband service in rural areas 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.

As amended, HB 961 would authorize the Department of Housing and Community Development to complete an inventory of state and local government assets by June 1, 2020. The inventory would then be used to create a map that includes all assets. Initially, this inventory and assessment only included population density and business density for unserved and underserved areas in *specified areas* of the state. As amended, the bill appropriately expands the range of geographic areas to be inventoried and mapped to *all* unserved or underserved areas of Maryland instead of areas in specified regions of the state.

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 authorized in this bill, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 961.