



Senate Bill 1041

Education - Digital Equity for All Act

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: March 16, 2016

To: Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee

From: Robin Clark Eilenberg, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 1041 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. As introduced, SB 1041 would require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop and adopt infrastructure standards that support the use of digital devices on a ratio of one device to one student, and would mandate local school systems to meet that standard by 2019. Additionally, the bill would establish a new grant program, with a requirement for the Governor to place \$3.5M in the State budget annually from FY18-22.

County governments appreciate the attention and funding that this legislation directs to school infrastructure needs. There are concerns that Maryland schools have varying levels of internet infrastructure, creating inequities. Without a comprehensive needs assessment of the current state of infrastructure, it is difficult to determine the realistic costs of reaching a goal of supporting one portable digital device per student by 2019.

A comprehensive needs assessment of the areas in the legislation would expose any unevenness in the internet infrastructure of Maryland schools and would allow the State to estimate the actual costs of reaching the legislation's intended goal. Without this assessment, this legislation may unintentionally create a new under-funded mandate for the school system, compromising other education priorities and straining county resources.

For these reasons, MACo recommends the Committee issue a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 1041 **WITH AMENDMENTS** to direct a critical evaluation of the tasks and costs ahead.

SB 1041 Amendment Offered by:

Maryland Association of Counties

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On pages 2-3, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 7 on page 2 through line 19 on page 3, inclusive.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, after line 6, insert:

“(B) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2016, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL DEVICES INTO THE STATES’ EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR MARYLAND K-12 STUDENTS.

THE STUDY SHALL INCLUDE:

- (1) A SURVEY OF CURRENT INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIGITAL DEVICE AVAILABILITY IN MARYLAND SCHOOLS;
- (2) A COST-ESTIMATE OF BRINGING ALL MARYLAND SCHOOLS UP TO THE LEVEL OF BEING ABLE TO SUPPORT ONE DEVICE PER STUDENT;
- (3) ANY PROCUREMENT AVENUES THAT MAY PROVE USEFUL IN PROVIDING DIGITAL DEVICES AND RELATED EQUIPMENT TO STUDENTS ACROSS MULTIPLE SCHOOL DISTRICTS; AND
- (4) A COST-ESTIMATE OF PROVIDING ONE DEVICE PER STUDENT IN ALL MARYLAND SCHOOLS.”