

Chapter 621

(Senate Bill 717)

AN ACT concerning

~~Task Force on Internet, Wireless, and Cellular Service on the Eastern Shore~~
Connecting Rural Maryland Act of 2017

FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service ~~on the Eastern Shore~~; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task Force; authorizing the chair of the Task Force to appoint additional members to the Task Force as deemed necessary by the chair; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses; requiring the Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding certain matters; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service ~~on the Eastern Shore~~.

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That:

(a) There is a Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service ~~on the Eastern Shore~~.

(b) ~~The~~ Subject to subsection (c)(2) of this section, the Task Force consists of the following members:

(1) four members of the Senate of Maryland, one who represents Western Maryland, one who represents Southern Maryland, one who represents the Eastern Shore, and one who represents Frederick, Carroll, or Harford counties, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(2) four members of the House of Delegates, one who represents Western Maryland, one who represents Southern Maryland, one who represents the Eastern Shore, and one who represents Frederick, Carroll, or Harford counties, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(3) the Secretary of Information Technology, or the Secretary's designee;

~~(2)~~ (4) the Secretary of Commerce, or the Secretary's designee;

~~(3)~~ a representative of the Maryland Association of Counties, appointed by the Maryland Association of Counties;

~~(4)~~ (5) a representative of the Maryland Municipal League, appointed by the Maryland Municipal League the Executive Director of the Rural Maryland Council, or the Executive Director's designee;

(6) one representative of the Public Service Commission, appointed by the Chairman of the Commission;

(7) one representative of each regional council in Western Maryland, Southern Maryland, and the Eastern Shore, appointed by the council of that region;

(8) one representative of a multicounty organization serving rural communities in Frederick, Carroll, or Harford counties, appointed by the chair of the Task Force; and

~~(5)~~ (9) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

(i) ~~one representative of Verizon;~~ four representatives from the Internet and Broadband industry; and

(ii) ~~one representative of Comcast Corporation;~~

~~(iii) one representative of First Responder Network Authority; and~~

~~(iv) one representative of the Consumer Electronics Association~~ four representatives from the telecommunications industry.

(c) (1) The Governor shall designate Executive Director of the Rural Maryland Council, or the Executive Director's designee, shall serve as the chair of the Task Force.

(2) The chair of the Task Force may appoint additional members to the Task Force as deemed necessary by the chair.

(d) The Department of Information Technology shall provide staff for the Task Force.

(e) A member of the Task Force:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(f) (1) The Task Force shall study and make recommendations regarding how Western Maryland counties, Southern Maryland counties, Eastern Shore counties, and Frederick, Carroll, and Harford counties can work together to obtain federal assistance to improve Internet, Broadband, wireless, and cellular services and accessibility in Western

Maryland, in Southern Maryland, on the Eastern Shore, and in Frederick, Carroll, and Harford counties.

(2) ~~The~~ In accordance with paragraph (3) of this subsection, the study required under paragraph (1) of this subsection shall include an examination of the various types of cellular service that are available, and an assessment of which type of cellular service would be most effective on the Eastern Shore;

(i) assess current Internet, Broadband, wireless, cellular, and landline service connectivity;

(ii) assess coverage for the users located at the end of the:

1. Internet service connectivity;
2. Broadband service connectivity;
3. wireless service connectivity;
4. cellular service connectivity; and
5. landline service connectivity;

(iii) evaluate redundancies and gaps in the current Internet, Broadband, wireless, cellular, and landline service connectivity; and

(iv) evaluate any federal funds applied for in response to any previous Broadband task force in the State.

(3) The study required under paragraph (1) of this subsection shall be based on publicly available and nonconfidential information.

(g) On or before ~~December 31~~ November 30, 2017, the Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2017. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and, at the end of May 31, 2018, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved by the Governor, May 25, 2017.