

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2011 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Joint Resolution 5      (Senator Benson, *et al.*)  
Finance

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**Public-Private Partnerships to Promote Broadband Internet Access**

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This joint resolution urges counties and municipalities in the State to promote and facilitate the creation of public-private partnerships to provide access to broadband Internet and related information technology to all Maryland residents, particularly those living in urban centers or underserved communities.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Compliance with this joint resolution does not materially affect local government finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law/Background:** Chapter 269 of 2006 established the Rural Broadband Assistance Fund (RBAF) as a special nonlapsing fund within the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED). It required a mandatory appropriation of \$4 million in fiscal 2008 and 2009, including \$2 million each year from the Maryland Economic Development Assistance Authority Fund. Chapter 269 also established the Maryland Rural Broadband Coordination Board, which is responsible for the review and approval of RBAF disbursements to assist in the establishment of broadband services in rural and underserved areas of the State. The Governor's proposed fiscal 2012 budget does not include any funding for RBAF.

The Maryland Rural Broadband Coordination Board distributes funding to the Maryland Broadband Cooperative. The Maryland Broadband Cooperative is a member-owned and -operated universal access, fiber optic network designed to deliver an advanced broadband network across rural communities in Eastern, Southern, and Western Maryland. The cooperative is a public-private partnership among DBED, five regional councils, and telecommunications companies serving Maryland. It is authorized to spend money from RBAF to plan, construct, and maintain broadband network access to rural communities on the Eastern Shore and in Western and Southern Maryland.

The Maryland Broadband Cooperative has also led the effort to create the Maryland Broadband Map, an online tool that allows citizens to discover in which neighborhoods and areas of the State high-speed Internet access is available.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 25, 2011  
ncs/mcr

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