



MARYLAND
Chamber of Commerce

LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

UNFAVORABLE

House Bill 43

Department of Information Technology –

Office of Broadband and Joint Committee on Broadband

House Economic Matters Committee

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 5,000 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic recovery and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

HB 43 seeks to establish an Office of Broadband under the Department of Information Technology and to set forth a Joint Legislative Committee on Broadband, among other things. The expansion of broadband into Maryland's rural and underserved urban areas is a necessity and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is supportive of that initiative. Access to functional and affordable internet service is vital to a thriving state economy and to creating an educated workforce, both of which have become glaring challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The expansion of internet connectivity throughout Maryland is an initiative that involves many stakeholders both public and private and rural and urban. As such, HB 43 establishes a Joint Committee on Broadband which does not include any members of private industry or the public at large who are key constituencies in this process. Furthermore, it is the concern of the Maryland Chamber membership that under the establishment of the Office of Broadband, those same key constituencies could be left out of the process.

With multiple pieces of legislation aiming to tackle the issue of internet connectivity throughout Maryland, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce stands ready to work alongside all the relevant stakeholders to find legislation that represents the best path forward.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on **HB 43**.

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