



Peter Franchot
Comptroller

TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT
Support - House Bill 43 - Department of Information Technology - Office of
Broadband and Joint Committee on Broadband
Economic Matters Committee
January 26, 2021

Chairman Davis, Vice Chairman Dumais and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in support of **House Bill 43 - Department of Information Technology - Office of Broadband and Joint Committee on Broadband**. I would like to thank Delegate Krimm for sponsoring this legislation.

Among other impacts, House Bill 43 alters the uses of the Rural Broadband Assistance Fund, adds a potential source of revenue in sports and event wagering, establishes an Office of Broadband in the Department of Information Technology to be led by a Director who serves at the pleasure of the Governor, and creates a Joint Committee on Broadband within the General Assembly.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on one of the largest inequalities that exists within our state. The digital divide is a monumental barrier to economic equality, impacting both rural and urban areas, particularly low-income communities where lack of infrastructure and unaffordable Internet service plans are major obstacles.

As tens of thousands of students returned to school virtually this year, we've seen how the digital gap has further disrupted the education of Maryland children, making it all the more difficult to learn and succeed in already trying circumstances.

For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a **favorable report** for House Bill 43. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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