



Testimony In Support of HB0918
- Montgomery County – Business Regulation – Landlord License
Environment and Transportation Committee
March 31, 2022
Chris Perry, Vice Chair, Renters Alliance Board of Directors

Good afternoon, Chair Smith and Vice Chair Stein.

I deliver this testimony on behalf of Chris Perry who serves as the Vice Chair of the Renters Alliance Board of Directors—the first and only regional nonprofit dedicated exclusively to renter outreach, education, organization and advocacy.

Tonight, the Renters Alliance speaks in support of HB918, which would allow and promote competition in the cable television market and accompanying broadband Internet service for renters in Montgomery County, and we thank Delegate Carr for his sponsorship of this legislation.

First, some facts. According to a recent Wikipedia article, the United States lags the Peoples Republic of China in total number of fixed broadband Internet subscriptions. And in terms of the number of subscriptions per 100 citizens, we're #24, behind Gibraltar, Switzerland, France, South Korea and Iceland. According to a 2018 report to Montgomery County government, "Because of the importance of broadband Internet access, it is becoming common place for businesses to purchase Internet service from at least two broadband service providers." HB918 states that, what is good for Montgomery County business is good for renters in apartments as well.

Now a story. During the 12 years I've lived in my apartment in downtown Silver Spring, I've only had access to one Internet service provider, and that is Comcast, also known as XFINITY. I have inquired about Verizon fiber optic service (FIOS) but never been able to get the service in my building. During that same time, I have tried unsuccessfully to interest my apartment management in two different service

providers who used innovative high-speed radio-based technology that competed directly with Comcast.

You can understand I'm very interested in Del. Carr's proposal to ease competition among broadband service providers. My wife and I are retirees who live on a fixed income. If I buy gasoline, bread, orange juice, or any other commodity, I have dozens of places offering the same product or equivalent at competitive prices. All I have to do is shop around to get the best deal.

But because apartment management companies get a cut from service providers for exclusive access to renters, we have to pay whatever Comcast feels like charging. And by the way, I have no alternative to sudden, unannounced failures in Comcast service, which can occasionally last for hours at a time. Verizon fiber optics would be more reliable and could be offered at or below the rate Comcast charges.

As a renter and a voter, I'm asking you to please support Del. Carr's measure, HB918. I believe it will make Comcast, Verizon, RCN and other service providers more competitive, and it will add my community to others in Montgomery County and the District that already offer both Comcast and Verizon FIOS to their tenants. It's time to break the monopoly and open Internet access to more families throughout Montgomery County.

References: Broadband Infrastructure for Developers: A Fiber Optic Connectivity Guidebook. October 2018. Prepared by CTC Energy & Technology for Montgomery County, Maryland, Montgomery County Office of Broadband Programs. WikiList of countries by number of broadband Internet subscriptions. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_broadband_Internet_subscriptions