



House Bill 626

Date: February 13, 2025

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Position: Unfavorable

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic health and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

House Bill 626 (HB 626) would significantly increase the cost of installing high-speed internet to currently unserved households across Maryland. Specifically, HB 626 would require a buried fiber optic cable installed in a highway right-of-way to include a certain type of conduit that contains at least seven microducts. HB 626 would then require the microduct to be made available to other broadband companies by the local government or Maryland Department of Transportation, for which the government could recover a fee.

The Maryland Chamber's understanding is that the conduit currently utilized for construction costs approximately \$4,000 per mile, and the conduit required by HB 626 would increase that cost to approximately \$32,000 per mile. That 800% increase in costs would significantly increase the cost of services offered by broadband companies, which include access to internet. For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on **HB 626**.