

SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
Legislative District 11  
Baltimore County

Chair, Rules Committee  
Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*  
Capital Budget  
Health and Human Services  
Chair, Pensions

*Joint Committees*  
Senate Chair, Audit and Evaluation  
Senate Chair, Pensions



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 220  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3131  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3131  
Shelly.Hettleman@senate.state.md.us

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
SB 846 - BUSINESS REGULATION - CELLULAR PHONE CARRIERS –  
SERVICE CONTRACT REQUIREMENT

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am writing to express my strong support for **SB 846 Business Regulation - Cellular Phone Carriers - Service Contract Requirement**.

This summer, I went to my cell phone carrier's store to purchase a new cell phone, intending to meet with staff to ensure that my data was successfully transferred from the old to the new one. I was aware that my husband was the primary contact on the account and had all of the appropriate passwords and information for our shared plan. As a result, I was unable to purchase a new phone or make any changes to the account without him being physically present. When I offered to get him on the phone or have him share his information directly, I was rebuffed. I felt dissatisfied, discouraged and patronized.

Unfortunately, I am not alone in this experience. After posting about the incident on social media, *many* others expressed frustration with facing similar circumstances. Several people shared stories of trying to make changes to their account or buy a new phone only to be met with the requirement that their primary account holder must be present in person to do so. For some this resulted in delays to their account modifications or an inability to buy a new phone altogether until the primary user was available. One individual even detailed how, following her divorce, she was unable to take herself off of the account as a secondary user. She stated that the phone company tried to urge her to make a new account, thereby forfeiting her loyalty discount as a member of over 10 years.

Under current policy, an existing customer is limited or unable to modify the contract without the agreement of the primary holder, reportedly, as a means to prevent fraud. I offered to share the same personal information as they had of my husband, but that was not good enough. This poses numerous issues to family members or individuals who are not listed on the account as the primary user. Instances in which the primary account holder is unavailable due to travel, illness, separation, or other circumstances can leave secondary users without the ability to access essential services, upgrade devices, or manage their own needs. This policy disproportionately affects spouses, family members, and individuals in shared plans by restricting account management and financial independence.

SB 846 requires a cellular phone carrier to include an option in the service contract that allows more than one individual who is a customer of record to the service contract to alter, modify, or cancel the service contract without the agreement of the other customers of record if all of the customers of record agree in writing to the option on execution of the service contract. This eliminates unnecessary barriers to accessing plans and services, ensuring that shared account holders have the autonomy to manage their own services without hurdles.

The current policies are infantilizing, problematic, and unintentionally sexist. SB 846 will ensure that shared contract holders have the opportunity to make changes to their account, breaking down these barriers and ensuring equitable access to phone services. Therefore, I urge a favorable report from the Finance Committee and thank you for your time.