



March 2, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Lorig Charkoudian
Vice Chair, House Economic Matters Committee
231 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for House Bill 1100

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian and Members of the Committee –

On behalf of CTIA®, the trade association for the wireless communications industry, I am testifying in support of House Bill 1100 related to improved protections for telecommunications critical infrastructure.

At a time of exploding consumer demand for wireless services, our industry is working hard to deploy and upgrade infrastructure for Maryland communities. In 2024, the wireless industry invested \$29 billion in private funding to maintain and upgrade wireless networks, and approximately \$220 billion since 2018. These investments support consumers and fuel economic growth in Maryland, where the wireless industry employs more than 96,000 residents and contributes \$10.2 billion to the state's GDP annually. However, ongoing criminal theft and vandalism of telecommunications infrastructure puts this progress at risk.

In recent years, a variety of factors have led to a significant uptick in the theft of copper and engineering equipment and destruction of telecommunications and broadband assets in Maryland and across the nation. During a one-year period in 2024-25, nearly 16,000 incidents of theft and vandalism were reported. While attention has focused on the price and resulting theft of copper, these incidents are impacting all types of wireless and broadband infrastructure. Perpetrators steal batteries and power cables from wireless towers and small cell sites, cut copper and other communication lines, and willfully and intentionally destroy wireless sites and fiber optic lines.

House Bill 1100 helps Maryland take important steps to address this problem of telecommunications vandalism. First, the bill adds telecommunications infrastructure and equipment to the state's existing criminal code governing vandalism of gas, water and electrical equipment. Second, the bill ensures that the existing rules and compliance requirements currently in place for scrap metal dealers operating in the state apply to telecommunications equipment in the same manner as they do now for other types of materials and items. Taken together, these provisions enhance protections for Maryland's telecommunications infrastructure and help stifle any secondary market for this stolen equipment.

The provisions in this bill are critical because the impacts of these incidents are broad-ranging and significant. Disruption of 911 systems and public safety communications can delay emergency response times, especially in rural communities. Our health care networks heavily depend on broadband connectivity for patient care, access to medical records, medical devices and telemedicine services. Our transportation systems – airports, railways and highways – depend on connectivity. In recent years, all



of these sectors and many others have been directly impacted by telecommunications and broadband vandalism, leading to both economic losses and increased risks to public health and safety.

Given the ongoing impacts of these incidents and our members' commitment to continue enhancing connectivity in Maryland communities, we strongly support House Bill 1100.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Crandall
Assistant Vice President
State Legislative Affairs