



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 382

DATE: February 12, 2026

SPONSOR: Delegate Fair, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Economic Matters

CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support (Montgomery County Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions)

Commercial Law – Broadband Access – Low-Income Consumer Programs (Maryland Broadband Opportunity and Fairness Act)

House Bill 382 requires broadband providers in Maryland to provide low-cost broadband services to eligible low-income consumers on or before December 1, 2026. The low-cost plans must meet the minimum speed for broadband as established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and households earning up to 350% of the federal poverty rate would be eligible to purchase them. The bill authorizes the Office of Statewide Broadband in the Department of Housing and Community Development to exempt providers from the requirement based on certain exceptions and establishes a Broadband Affordability Advisory Board to define “low-cost broadband service.”

Montgomery County Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS) supports this legislation because: (1) most providers can meet the requirements; (2) low-income families need broadband plans that meet the federal minimum broadband speeds; and (3) low-cost broadband is good for the Maryland economy.

When the federal government and Maryland partnered to offer an internet subsidy (the Affordable Connectivity Plan, ACP), 12% of Maryland low-income households enrolled (287,000 households). Thirty percent of Maryland households subscribing to broadband are low-income. Almost a quarter of low-income broadband subscribers are using a plan that does not meet the federal minimum broadband speed. And according to the United Way ALICE data, the basic survival budget for many Maryland households is 300 to 350% of the federal poverty rate.

Access to low-cost broadband increases household income and employment. All Maryland households, regardless of income, should have access to affordable broadband plans that meet minimal federal speed requirements. Broadband is a modern and essential service, critical for accessing employment opportunities, education, healthcare (telehealth), and government services, as well as for fostering important social inclusion in our communities. Montgomery County TEBS supports HB 382 and urges that the Committee adopt a favorable report.

ACP Enrollment & Basic Needs as % of Federal Poverty Rate Data by County

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP): Maryland households enrolled in a benefit program or earning less than 200% of federal poverty rate to receive up to \$30 per month subsidy for internet service. The United Way calculates the budget needs for ALICE households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). The chart below shows the ALICE survival household budget as a percentage of the federal poverty rate.

TOTAL Maryland ACP ENROLLMENT Through January 31, 2024		2025 United Way ALICE Data % of Federal Poverty Rate to meet basic needs (2023)	
County Name	Total Subscribers	Two Seniors	Family of 4
NOT AVAILABLE	862		
Allegany County	4,809	257%	245%
Anne Arundel County	16,390	348%	361%
Baltimore City	83,772	321%	320%
Baltimore County	44,537	318%	323%
Calvert County	2,291	361%	350%
Caroline County	1,610	270%	259%
Carroll County	3,584	313%	321%
Cecil County	4,794	308%	296%
Charles County	5,536	363%	354%
Dorchester County	2,699	266%	252%
Frederick County	6,495	349%	347%
Garrett County	1,396	246%	233%
Harford County	8,468	318%	326%
Howard County	6,646	354%	386%
Kent County	817	290%	284%
Montgomery County	25,252	368%	378%
Prince George's County	39,386	347%	325%
Queen Anne's County	1,037	321%	324%
St. Mary's County	4,156	316%	317%
Somerset County	2,451	254%	246%
Talbot County	1,066	303%	282%
Washington County	9,096	263%	264%
Wicomico County	8,325	270%	265%
Worcester County	2,247	271%	265%
TOTAL MD ACP Enrollment	287,722	308%	305%