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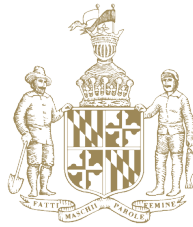
Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Election Law

Local Government/Bi-County
Agencies and Administration

Chair, Maryland Legislative
LGBTQ+ Caucus



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama, Chair
Economic Matters Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 230
Annapolis, MD 21401

HB 382: Maryland Broadband Opportunity and Fairness Act

Chair Valderrama, Vice-Chair Charkoudian, and Esteemed Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

HB 382 is, at its core, a statement of Maryland's values: access to the modern public square should not depend on the size of someone's paycheck. In 2026, broadband is how children learn, patients see a clinician, and workers apply for jobs. It functions as a basic utility, as necessary as water and electricity, and a just society ensures that essential services are available to everyone. HB 382 answers that moral imperative and requires that any large internet service provider must offer at least one affordable plan that actually meets today's standard of service: 100/20 Mbps in alignment with federal requirements, with adequate data usage caps and guarantees of reliability so low-income residents can fully participate in modern civic and economic life.

When the federal Affordable Connectivity Program ended, families who relied on it to afford broadband service did not stop needing the internet; instead, they had to sacrifice. Parents rationed bandwidth so children could do homework, adults deferred telehealth or missed work opportunities, and many were subject to disruptive disconnections and burdensome fees. The lack of access steals time, money, and opportunity from the Marylanders with the least expendable income to spare. HB 382 proposes a fair baseline. Requiring visible, standalone, affordable plans guarantees usability for the modern internet era. Marylanders will not have to choose between a child's learning, a decent income, and a patient's care.

Living up to Maryland's values demands that geography, socio-economic status, or race must not determine a family's digital and economic fate. Rural Marylanders and many minority communities face fewer choices and higher barriers due to decades of underinvestment. Dependable low-cost broadband access increases household spending power and the probability of employment, while enabling cost-saving virtual services, like telehealth. These are tangible gains that ripple through classrooms, clinics, and local economies. HB 382 ensures those gains are equitable, and no community is left behind.-cost -saving

Providers have argued that Maryland should postpone this affordability measure to protect federal grants due to new requirements from the Trump administration prohibiting cost-setting measures as a condition of continued BEAD funding. This bill is specifically designed to work within the administration's new framework and avoid exactly that problem. To do this, HB 382 **codifies large portions of the federal BEAD statute into Maryland law**, creating an advisory board to define "low-cost" in conformity with federal requirements and requiring the board to submit that definition to NTIA, mirroring [47 U.S.C. § 1702](#).

To address concerns about impacts on local providers, the bill also empowers the Office of Statewide Broadband to adjust the terms of compliance where necessary and to exempt providers with fewer than 20,000 subscribers who cannot sustainably meet the bill's conditions, ensuring flexibility for small providers without abandoning families. To ensure accountability, the bill **enables the Attorney General to enforce any board-approved affordability definition under Maryland consumer protection law**, so that policy promises translate to affordable connectivity in homes.

Conscience and common sense require that we make internet service usable and affordable. The Department of Legislative Services fiscal analysis states that HB 382 can be implemented with existing resources and that there is no material fiscal impact on State or local government.

Our responsibility as legislators is to lift burdens and create equal opportunity for all. HB 382 opens the door to a classroom where all students can log in, a clinic where a senior can virtually see a doctor, and a job where a future employee can apply and interview online. It is fair, feasible, and the right thing to do. I urge the Committee to return a favorable report.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Kris Fair

District 3, Frederick County