



## MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

*Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO*

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### **HB 1037 - Public Service Commission - Broadband and Voice Over Internet Protocol Service - Oversight (Broadband Accountability and Affordability Act)**

#### **House Environment and Transportation**

**March 3, 2026**

#### **SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards**

#### **Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1037. On behalf of 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

HB 1037 authorizes the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to exercise oversight of broadband and Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service quality, require outage reporting, evaluate emergency preparedness plans, and mandate remedial actions if the PSC determines that the practices of an internet service provider are unjust, unreasonable, unsafe, improper, or inadequate.

Deregulation at the state and federal levels has eroded public oversight of telecommunications providers. Consumers have few meaningful protections, and internet service providers operate with limited accountability to the people who rely on them. Broadband is an essential infrastructure that connects people with work, education, healthcare, public safety, and more. Everyone uses the internet, and everyone depends on it to function reliably.

An important provision of the bill is the PSC's authority to establish backup power requirements for broadband, VoIP, and wireless networks. Communication services using fiber, coaxial cable, and wireless systems will fail without adequate backup power. Today, many wireless customers are left vulnerable during outages because providers are not required to maintain sufficient capacity. This oversight and reliability is especially needed during emergencies. When storms, floods, or other disasters hit, the public must have access to communications to stay informed and connected. However, Marylanders experience long outages with limited transparency and no recourse. HB 1037 ensures that the PSC can assess whether providers are maintaining their networks, planning for



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emergencies, and restoring service quickly after disruptions. This is about public safety and consumer protection.

HB 1037 brings accountability to this industry where it is much needed and ensures that residents, businesses, and first responders can rely on the communication systems they depend on every day.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 1037.



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