

DAVID S. LAPP
PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

WILLIAM F. FIELDS
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

JULIANA BELL
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

————— **OPC** —————
OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL
State of Maryland

6 ST. PAUL STREET, SUITE 2102
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202
WWW.OPC.MARYLAND.GOV

BRANDI NIELAND
DIRECTOR, CONSUMER
ASSISTANCE UNIT

CARISSA RALBOVSKY
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

BILL NO.: House Bill 1562 – Consumer Protection -
Telecommunications Service Outage - Automatic Credit
(Automatic Telecommunications Service Outage Credit Act)

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

HEARING DATE: March 13, 2026

SPONSOR: Delegate Wu

POSITION: Informational

The Office of People’s Counsel (OPC) respectfully offers the following informational testimony regarding House Bill 1562. This legislation creates a new Subtitle 51 under Title 14 of the Commercial Law Article that requires commercial telecommunications providers to automatically apply a service disruption credit to the accounts of customers affected by a “material service outage.”

HB 1562 defines a material service outage as a disruption of wireless voice, text, or data service lasting at least three consecutive hours. By mandating a minimum credit equal to a prorated one-day equivalent of the customer’s monthly service charge, the bill ensures that consumers are not forced to pay for a service they did not receive. Crucially, this credit must be applied automatically, removing the administrative burden from the consumer and placing the onus of accountability squarely on the provider. Under the bill, violations would constitute an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act (MCPA).

HB 1562 would extend to the customers of wireless companies a remedy for service interruptions similar to what the PSC requires for regulated landline providers. Under Public Utilities Article (PUA) § 5-303, every landline provider must furnish services and facilities that are “safe, adequate, just, reasonable, economical, and efficient.”¹ The PSC implements this provision, in part, by ensuring that the tariffs of landline companies provide for customer refunds for significant interruptions of service.

¹ PUA § 5-303.

But wireless companies are not regulated by the PSC and operate entirely outside the PUA's framework. There is no current Maryland law that requires a wireless carrier to automatically compensate a residential customer for a service outage of any duration. The consequence of this gap was on national display when AT&T's wireless network failed for approximately eleven hours on February 22, 2024, affecting millions of customers across the country, including Maryland residents.² While AT&T's response was a voluntary \$5 credit, there was no legal obligation to provide any compensation at all.

House Bill 1562 extends to the wireless context the same logic that has long governed Maryland's landline framework: When a carrier collects a monthly service charge, it accepts a corresponding obligation to deliver continuous, reliable service, and when it fails to meet that obligation, automatic, quantifiable consequences should follow. OPC is pleased to support the Committee's work on behalf of Maryland ratepayers and thanks you for the opportunity to provide this information on HB 1562.

² <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-404150A1.pdf>. FCC Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Report on the February 22, 2024, AT&T Outage (July 22, 2024).