



# MARYLAND TECH COUNCIL

ADVANCING LIFE SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Senate Finance Committee

February 26, 2026

Senate Bill 571 – *Commercial Law – Broadband Access – Low-Income Consumer Programs (Maryland Broadband Opportunity and Fairness Act)*

**POSITION: OPPOSE**

The Maryland Tech Council (MTC), with over 800 members, is the State's largest association of technology companies. Our vision is to propel Maryland to be the country's number one innovation economy for life sciences and technology. MTC brings the State's life sciences and technology communities into a single, united organization that empowers members to achieve their goals through advocacy, networking, and education. On behalf of MTC, we submit this letter of **opposition** to Senate Bill 571.

This bill would require broadband providers serving 10,000 or more customers to create and administer low-income broadband service programs by December 1, 2026, with mandated minimum service standards, advertising requirements, and annual reporting obligations, and would also classify violations as unfair or deceptive trade practices. MTC strongly supports the goal of expanding affordable broadband access, yet the structure and obligations embedded in Senate Bill 571 risk creating barriers rather than facilitating progress.

The bill's prescriptive service level-level requirements, including mandated minimum speeds, latency standards, and limitations on price adjustments, are inflexible in a sector where technology evolves rapidly, and network demands expand unpredictably. These conditions may quickly become outdated, compromising providers' ability to respond to emerging needs and invest in network improvements across Maryland. Additionally, the bill's significant regulatory and administrative responsibilities, including detailed annual compliance reports and mandated advertising of low-income programs, could disproportionately burden mid-sized and regional providers. These providers are key to expanding last-mile connectivity, and diverting resources toward compliance processes risks slowing deployment in the very communities the bill seeks to help.

The exemption process described in the legislation does little to reduce this uncertainty. Although the Office of Statewide Broadband may exempt providers who face undue financial hardship and serve fewer than 20,000 households, the criteria are not clearly defined, requiring providers to invest substantial time and resources in compliance planning even before they know whether an exemption is possible. Moreover, classifying noncompliance as an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice heightens legal and financial risks for what may be administrative errors rather than intentional misconduct. This classification introduces exposure not typically associated with broadband affordability programs and could further deter investment and innovation.

For these reasons, the MTC respectfully urges the General Assembly to reconsider Senate Bill 571. We believe a collaborative approach that emphasizes flexibility, harmonizes with existing federal and state initiatives, and supports continued private s-sector investment will better advance our shared commitment to expanding affordable, high-quality broadband access across Maryland. We stand ready to work with legislators and State agencies to craft solutions that achieve these goals without imposing unintended barriers to progress.

**For more information call:**

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