



TESTIMONY FOR SB0571
Commercial Law - Broadband Access - Low-Income Consumer Programs
(Maryland Broadband Opportunity and Fairness Act)

Bill Sponsor: Senator Ellis

Committee: Finance

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0571 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state. We have over 30,000 members across the state.

Maryland needs broadband for everyone. We cannot educate our children or compete effectively in business without it. Maryland has made strides in making broadband accessible throughout the state, but available and affordable are both hurdles that individuals and families must jump in order to be able to truly access broadband.

This bill, if enacted, would require all the providers of broadband in the state to create a low-cost broadband service plan that would be available to low-income customers. That plan would have to support –

- a minimum broadband speed of
- 100 megabits per second download speed and 20 megabits per second upload speed for a household of two or less OR
- 200 megabits per second download speed and 20 megabits per second upload speed for a household of three or more
- at least 1.2 terabytes of data storage
- a latency that is sufficiently low to allow reasonably foreseeable, real-time, interactive applications.

A provider may, once every 3 years, increase the price of broadband service provided under the provider's program by the lesser of: the most recent change in the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers, or not more than 2% per year. There are exceptions in the bill for service providers that provide broadband to a relatively small number of consumers, or if the provision of a low-cost service is not practical.

We must do everything we can to ensure that **all** the residents of the state have the same access to information. The Maryland Legislative Coalition supports this bill and we recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.