

**February 24, 2026**

**Testimony of Hooman Hedayati**

Senior Strategic Research Associate for Telecommunications Policy, Communications Workers of America, In Support of SB0605

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0605. CWA is the nation's largest labor union representing telecommunications workers, including many here in Maryland.

Over the past several decades, deregulation at both the state and federal levels has significantly reduced oversight of telecommunications providers. As a result, consumers often lack meaningful protections, and internet service providers face limited accountability to their subscribers and the communities they serve. The effort to regulate broadband at the federal level has hit a wall, as the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the Biden FCC's reclassification of broadband as a common-carrier telecommunications service, and the Trump FCC refused to defend the rules and has since deleted them.

Broadband is a mature, dominant communications service. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) has largely replaced traditional copper-based plain old telephone service. According to the most recent Federal Communications Commission data, only 15 percent of Maryland's wireline voice subscribers remain connected through Public Service Commission (PSC)-regulated switched access lines. That represents 114,000 regulated lines, compared to 643,000 unregulated interconnected VoIP connections. In addition, approximately 7.3 million mobile voice subscriptions in Maryland fall outside PSC jurisdiction.

As telecommunications providers accelerate the retirement of legacy copper networks,

Maryland faces a growing regulatory oversight gap. While we hope the federal government will reassert its oversight role, the current landscape leaves significant responsibilities unaddressed. In this environment, it is especially important for Maryland to establish clear regulatory authority over broadband and VoIP services to ensure reliability, consumer protection, and accountability.

Because the FCC has chosen to relinquish its authority over broadband, states cannot be preempted from establishing their own authority. Even if the federal government reasserts common carrier authority over broadband and VoIP, which we hope it does, states still have the authority to enforce their own telecom laws, as long as they do not conflict with federal rules. The Communications Act preserves the states' ability to impose "requirements necessary to preserve and advance universal service, protect the public safety and welfare, ensure the continued quality of telecommunications services, and safeguard the rights of consumers."

Sincerely,

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