

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle  
Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Maryland Senate  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

*RE: SB 571 (Ellis) - Commercial Law - Broadband Access - Low-Income Consumer Programs (Maryland Broadband Opportunity and Fairness Act) – Unfavorable*

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of TechNet, I'm writing to share concerns on SB 571.

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes 103 dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents five million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, transportation, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance.

TechNet is concerned that SB 571 will jeopardize Maryland's access to \$79.1 million in federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding. In our view, this bill directly conflicts with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice (RPN) low-cost service option (LSCO) rules, including with respect to pricing, speeds, and eligibility criteria. If enacted, the bill also would constitute the kind of state broadband regulation that violates NTIA's BEAD General Terms and Conditions (GTCs).

The eligibility criteria for the proposed low-income consumer program goes beyond those that apply to the FCC's Lifeline program. Thus, the Section 14-5105(D)(1) requirement that the Broadband Affordability Advisory Board adopt a BEAD LSCO definition that "[m]eet[s] the requirements of this subtitle" conflicts with the BEAD RPN's Lifeline-based "Eligible Subscriber" definition for the LSCO.

Various provisions of the bill violate BEAD RPN LSCO requirements and go beyond some of the affordable home internet offerings our members provide to qualifying households. These offerings include lower-priced internet plans, low-cost

computers, free Wifi hotspots, and free internet training. Moreover, on page 5, starting at line 9, the language is overly broad. Under 14-5102, sections (G) and (H) are generally problematic and don't fit in the context of this consumer-facing bill. These requirements would dictate how a private provider manages their network. Finally, in Section 14-5105 (A)(2), NTIA has already approved Maryland's plan and defined "Low-Cost Service Option".

For the reasons stated above, TechNet is opposed to SB 571 and urges an unfavorable report due to the risks it would pose to federal BEAD funding. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

*Margaret Durkin*

Margaret Durkin  
TechNet Executive Director, Pennsylvania & the Mid-Atlantic