



Senate Bill 571

Position: Unfavorable
Committee: Finance
Date: February 26, 2026

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (“Maryland Chamber”) is a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth and opportunity for all Marylanders.

Senate Bill 571(SB 571) would disrupt Maryland’s broadband progress. For more than two decades, competition and regulation that fosters innovation has driven significant improvements in broadband access, speed, and affordability. Maryland consistently ranks among the top states for broadband coverage and performance. In 2024 alone, broadband providers invested nearly \$90 billion in U.S. communications infrastructure, contributing to more than \$2.2 trillion in cumulative investment since 1996. During that same period, broadband prices have declined substantially in real terms, even as speeds and service quality have improved.

Building and maintaining broadband networks—especially fiber infrastructure in rural and hard-to-reach areas—requires enormous upfront capital and long-term investment. Government mandated price caps artificially limit potential returns, making it more difficult for providers to justify high-risk infrastructure projects. Regulatory uncertainty also discourages new entrants and chills competition, which ultimately harms consumers.

Significant affordability programs already exist. BEAD requires providers receiving funds to offer a low-income plan, though federal guidance prohibits states from setting the rate. Many internet service providers have also voluntarily introduced low-income broadband options. Eligible households can receive additional assistance through the federal Lifeline program. Maryland should carefully assess the effectiveness of these existing tools before imposing sweeping price mandates.

SB 571 would jeopardize Maryland’s federal broadband funding. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration has indicated that states imposing rate regulations on BEAD-supported providers risk losing access to these critical funds. Putting those resources at risk would slow progress toward universal connectivity.

Maryland has successfully expanded broadband through market-driven policies and public-private partnerships. SB 571 would represent a significant shift towards a regulatory framework that

would deter investment and slow progress at a critical time. **For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber respectfully requests an unfavorable report on SB 571.**

