



Maryland
Hospital Association

HB 243- Task Force on Rural Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service - Study and Extension

Position: Support

Bill Summary

HB 243 would require the Task Force on Rural, Internet, Broadband, Wireless, and Cellular Service, in conducting a certain study, to solicit input from local governments and Internet service providers on identifying unserved and underserved areas in Western Maryland counties, Southern Maryland counties, Eastern Shore counties, and Frederick, Carroll, and Harford counties; extending the date by which the Task Force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly to November 30, 2018; etc.

MHA Position

Maryland's hospitals support efforts that improve the accessibility and quality of telecommunications services in rural areas, as these technologies better equip health care providers to offer innovative telehealth services.

In an [interim report](#) to the Maryland Health Care Commission from the Work Group on Rural Health Delivery, the group recommends that Maryland expand the availability of telehealth, in part through an increase in broadband and "last mile" connectivity. The expansion of these services directly supports telehealth, which virtually connects providers and patients remotely.

This form of health care, enabled by great advancements in technological capabilities, facilitates patient self-management and non-professional caregiver support for patients, especially in rural areas where there are fewer providers. In Maryland, telehealth supports the success of the All-Payer Model, as care delivery can be streamlined and providers can optimize their time with patients. Payers, health care providers, and patients all agree that telehealth is a promising way to expand access to cost-efficient care and to deliver that care in a setting tailored to each patient's needs.

Health care providers are eager to broaden the delivery of care via telehealth, but to do so requires a corresponding investment in technological infrastructure.

For these reasons, we urge you to give HB 243 a *favorable* report.