

~~WHEREAS, the Forum for Rural Maryland and the rural regional development organizations have repeatedly articulated the need for broadband Internet access to create economically competitive communities, and are currently in the process of performing studies to evaluate demand aggregation, establishing business community partnerships for developing innovative communications service provision, and making applications to the federal government for program and infrastructure funding; and~~

~~WHEREAS, the Tri County Council for Western Maryland has initiated a follow up "eReadiness Maryland" project to quantify current and future broadband demand and identify specific investment requirements to make the region's information infrastructure more accessible and robust; and~~

~~WHEREAS, the Tri County Council for Southern Maryland has organized a formal task group of local and regional public and private sector representatives to address the need for communications demand aggregation and the deployment of infrastructure and services; and~~

~~WHEREAS, the Mid Shore Regional Council and Tri County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore have authorized a formal study to quantify current and future demand and identify specific investment requirements that will make the region's information infrastructure more accessible and robust; and~~

~~WHEREAS, there is a need for a comprehensive State plan to support the local and regional implementation of programs for broadband communications services in rural areas; now, therefore,~~

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

#### **Article — State Finance and Procurement**

3-702.

(a) The Department shall:

~~(1) coordinate the development, procurement, management and operation of telecommunication equipment, systems, and services by State government, BOTH BY DIRECT ACQUISITION AND BY USE OF OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INFRASTRUCTURE;~~

~~(2) acquire and manage common user telecommunication equipment, systems, [or] AND services and [charge] PROVIDE A STANDARD INTERFACE FOR COMMON BACKBONE SERVICES AT A FLAT RATE TO units of State government [for their proportionate share of the costs of installation, maintenance, and operation of the common user telecommunication equipment, systems, or services] AND MAKE SUPPLEMENTAL INTENSIVE HIGH BANDWIDTH SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THOSE UNITS AT ADDITIONAL COST;~~

~~(3) promote compatibility of telecommunication systems by developing policies, procedures, and standards for the acquisition and use of telecommunication equipment, systems, and services by units of State government;~~