



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE AND SENATE

WIRELESS LANDLINE TELEPHONE SERVICE – PROHIBITION AND STUDY

HOUSE BILL 447— ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 343 – FINANCE COMMITTEE

February 6, 2014

DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Oppose

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is an independent non-partisan regional business advocacy organization of more than 500 businesses—large, medium and small—educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 59-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability as a region. It is an organization that prides itself on advocating for changes in public policies that strengthen the business climate while improving the quality of life in the region.

The Greater Baltimore Committee **Opposes** HB447/SB343 - Wireless Landline Telephone Service – Prohibition and Study.

HB447/SB343 prohibits telephone companies from replacing landline or wireline telephone service with wireless telephone service to customers and prohibits the Public Service Commission (PSC) from authorizing this action unless customers consent to it by way of a form authorized by the PSC or in the event that PSC authorizes the action in response to weather, natural disasters or other emergencies. Telephone companies affected by this bill would also be required to submit a report to the PSC that highlights the performance and impact of wireless services on reliability, safety, extreme situations, cost, and access.

HB447/SB343 stifles a competitive and diversified telecommunications industry in Maryland that is already in motion and expanding by unfairly targeting certain companies—in this case, telephone companies that provide switched local exchange access service using their own plant—but not applying the same oversight and restrictions to other companies with similar wireless service products.

These aspects of HB447/SB343 render it unreasonable and inequitable to a range of businesses in the State. These outcomes are inconsistent with one the GBC's eight core pillars for economic growth and job creation outlined in our report, *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*:

Competitive costs of doing business. Public policies must reflect a government predisposition to nurture business growth and to avoid arbitrarily or disproportionately imposing additional overhead upon the business sector. For the reasons stated above, the Greater Baltimore Committee requests an **unfavorable report of House Bill 447.**

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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