

## **JOINT COMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES, AND ENERGY**

### **BILL SUMMARY**

**BILL NO.** H.3527 (Senate Companion S.2318)

**TITLE:** An Act preserving broadband service for low-income consumers

**SPONSOR:** Representative Rita A. Mendes

**COMMITTEE:** Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy

**HEARING DATE:** May 6, 2025

**PRIOR HISTORY:** New bill

#### **CURRENT LAW:**

M.G.L. c. 25C establishes the Department of Telecommunications and Cable, which oversees broadband telecommunications in the Commonwealth.

#### **SUMMARY:**

This bill amends Chapter 25C by creating a new section that requires any provider of wireline, fixed wireless, or satellite broadband service to offer low-cost, high-speed broadband access to low-income households. Monthly fees for broadband service would be capped at \$15 per month, which could be adjusted based on the consumer price index every 5 years. The \$15 cap is inclusive of any recurring taxes and fees, such as recurring rental fees for service provider equipment required to obtain broadband service.

The minimum download speed must equal the greater of one hundred megabits per second download speed, or the download speed of the provider's existing low-income broadband service sold to customers in the state, subject to exceptions adopted by the department of telecommunications and cable where such download speed is not reasonably practicable. A broadband service provider that offers a high-speed broadband service to eligible low-income customers at a download speed of two hundred megabits per second or greater may increase the cap to no more than \$20 per month.

A household will qualify for high-speed broadband service if there is a household member that participates in one of these assistance programs:

1. SNAP
2. Medicaid
3. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
4. Federal or State Housing Assistance
5. WIC
6. Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits
7. Lifeline
8. Qualifying Tribal land assistance programs
9. Free or reduced-priced lunch through the National School Lunch Program; or
10. A household whose annual gross household income is not in excess of two hundred percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Broadband service providers in Massachusetts must submit an annual compliance report to DTC setting forth: (a) a description of the service offered pursuant to this bill; (b) the number of consumers enrolled in such service; (c) a description of the procedures being used to verify the eligibility of customers receiving

such service; (d) a description and samples of the advertising or marketing efforts undertaken to advertise or promote such service; (e) a description of all retail rate products, including pricing, offered by such person, business, corporation, or their agents; (f) a description, including speed and price, of all broadband products offered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and (g) such other information as the department of telecommunications and cable may require.

The bill gives the Attorney General authority to seek injunctions when broadband providers fail to meet the foregoing requirements and creates penalties of up to \$1,000 per violation.