

ConsumersUnion®

POLICY & ACTION FROM CONSUMER REPORTS

April 5, 2017

Senator Thomas "Mac" Middleton, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

cc: Members of the Committee

RE: SB1200–Internet Consumer Privacy Rights Act of 2017
Position: Favorable

Dear Senator,

Consumers Union, the policy and mobilization arm of Consumer Reports,¹ writes regarding Senate consideration of SB 1200 sponsored by Senator Jim Rosapepe. This measure, if passed, would provide some necessary protections for consumers when it comes to the companies that provide internet service. In light of the recent vote by the U.S. Congress to nullify the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) broadband privacy rules, which would have given consumers better control over their data, we support this state-level action to protect consumers. While consumer broadband privacy may not be sufficiently protected at the federal level, states like Maryland can act now to protect their residents and provide necessary privacy safeguards and controls for consumers. **We urge you to vote yes on SB 1200.**

Consumers need and deserve more control over how their information is collected by internet service providers (ISPs). ISPs, by virtue of their position as gatekeepers to everything on the internet, enjoy a unique window into consumers' online activities. Data including websites consumers visit, videos viewed, and messages sent is very valuable and

¹ Consumers Union is the public policy and advocacy division of Consumer Reports. Consumers Union works for a fair, just, and safe marketplace for all consumers and to empower consumers to protect themselves, focusing on the areas of telecommunications, health care, food and product safety, energy, and financial services, among others. Consumer Reports is the world's largest independent product-testing organization. Using its more than 50 labs, auto test center, and survey research center, the nonprofit organization rates thousands of products and services annually. Founded in 1936, Consumer Reports has over eight million subscribers to its magazine, website, and other publications.

personal.

There is no question that consumers favor more control over the personal data their ISP can collect and sell. Earlier this year, Consumers Union launched an online petition drive in support of the Federal Communication Commission's broadband privacy rules. To date, close to 50,000 consumers have signed the petition and the number is growing. Consumers care about privacy and want strong privacy protections.

We encourage you to support SB 1200.

Respectfully,



Katie McInnis
Policy Counsel
Consumers Union



Jonathan Schwantes
Senior Policy Counsel
Consumers Union