

May 28, 2021

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House of Delegates
H-101 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Speaker Jones:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have vetoed House Bill 97 – *Department of Housing and Community Development – Office of Statewide Broadband – Established (Digital Connectivity Act of 2021)*.

This bill establishes the Office of Statewide Broadband (OSB) within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as the successor to the Office of Rural Broadband, with expanded responsibilities. The Governor is required to include sufficient funding in the annual operating budget to employ two additional staff members. The bill establishes the Digital Inclusion Fund and the Digital Connectivity Fund within DHCD to provide grants to local governments and nonprofits to increase access to high-speed Internet and to assist in the development of affordable broadband Internet infrastructure. The bill also transfers the Rural Broadband Coordination Board (RBCB) and the Rural Broadband Assistance Fund (RBAF) from the Department of Commerce to OSB.

Senate Bill 66, which was passed by the General Assembly and signed by me, accomplishes the same purpose. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to sign House Bill 97.

Sincerely,

Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor