



## Maryland Municipal League

*The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns*

# TESTIMONY

January 26, 2021

**Committee:** House Economic Matters

**Bill:** HB 97 - Department of Housing and Community Development - Office of Digital Inclusion - Established (Digital Connectivity Act of 2021)

**Position:** Support

**Reason for Position:**

The Maryland Municipal League supports HB 97 which creates a new Office of Digital Inclusion. The Office will focus on the important task of increasing broadband Internet deployment in the State; one aspect of which will be supporting municipalities with their plans to address broadband access locally.

The issue of access, or lack thereof, to broadband Internet has been spotlighted recently as many businesses and schools shifted to a heavily digital environment. Municipalities across the State are all unique, but a common thread is the demand for Internet access by their residents and businesses. Often the population and economic hubs of their area, municipalities need reliable Internet in order to maintain their vibrancy and to connect with friends, family, and customers outside the city.

In addition to tackling the important task of increasing access to broadband statewide, the bill assists municipalities achieve similar goals at the local level in several ways:

1. Development and deployment of digital literacy training.
2. Identification of specific areas of demand for Internet access.
3. Delivery of resources to local governments, such as grant funding application assistance.

The bill addresses the issue of statewide broadband access and provides assistance to municipalities, allowing for local governments to play their part in creating a solution. For these reasons we therefore respectfully request that the committee provide a favorable report on HB 97.

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