



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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

SPONSOR: Delegate Lierman, et al

HEARING DATE: January 26, 2021

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 97**, which establishes the Office of Digital Inclusion in the Department of Housing and Community Development to ensure that every resident of the State is supported by high-quality broadband Internet service at an affordable price and has the tools necessary to use and take advantage of the Internet. The Bill requires the Governor to appoint the Director of the Office; requires the Office to develop, by July 1, 2022, a statewide plan to ensure all State residents have the ability to connect to reliable broadband Internet by December 31, 2029.

Due to the current pandemic, high quality broadband is essential to online schooling. This year has been challenging for every school system to promise 100 percent coverage of high-quality broadband for every student. There are gaps in coverage in both rural and urban areas across the State. **HB 97** will provide an Office of Digital Inclusion which will assure better coverage across the State, including Prince George's County. It will provide the necessary tools for every child for better learning and access to other groups, i.e. seniors, in the State.

Better, high-quality broadband is a priority of my Administration. Prince George's County Public School System has already worked out agreements with broadband and wi-fi providers to assist student with online teaching during this pandemic. We must keep pushing forward for our kids.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 97** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.