



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 66 - Department of Housing and Community Development - Office of Digital Inclusion - Established (Digital Connectivity Act of 2021)

SPONSOR: Senator Elfreth, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 9, 2021

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 66 - Department of Housing and Community Development - Office of Digital Inclusion - Established (Digital Connectivity Act of 2021)**, 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 also directs the Office to prepare a statewide plan to ensure every state resident can connect to universal, affordable, and reliable broadband internet before 2030.

The digital divide in Maryland has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health crises, with many jobs and schools transitioning away from in-person access to internet-only. For families in need who lack a computer or high-speed internet access, this brave new world of internet-only schooling and work risks further isolating those who can least afford it. We, in Prince George's County, have already taken several steps to help connect families, with Prince George's County Public Schools committing \$2 million and partnering with Verizon and Comcast help families in need connect to the internet. While we are doing our part to help close this divide, it is time that the State made it a priority to ensure that all Marylanders have access to high-speed internet.

For these reasons, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 66** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.