



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

### Budget & Tax Committee

**SB 66: Department of Housing and Community Development - Office of Digital Inclusion - Established  
(Digital Connectivity Act of 2021)**

**February 9, 2021**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) has a mission to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation. This bill seeks to do just that. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. From that perspective, **the DD Council supports SB 66.**

#### **WHY is this legislation important?**

- Access to reliable, high-quality broadband Internet service at an affordable price is important to all Marylanders, including people with disabilities.
- Maryland's citizens with developmental disabilities want and need to participate in everyday activities online.
- This bill helps to ensure affordable, reliable internet access for all regardless of zip code or income level.
- That could mean communicating with family, a healthcare professional, a bank or arranging a grocery delivery.
- Services and supports for people with disabilities, via the Developmental Disabilities Administration can be provided remotely and online.

#### **WHAT does this legislation do?**

- Establishes the Office of Digital Inclusion within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as the successor to the Office of Rural Broadband, albeit with expanded responsibilities.
- Requires the Governor to include sufficient funding in the budget to employ two additional staff members.
- The bill also repeals the Rural Broadband Coordination Board and the Rural Broadband Assistance Fund

**The additional access the internet afforded by SB 66 is essential so people with developmental disabilities can access remote services and supports, telehealth, remain connected to family and friends, and be able to fully participate in a variety of activities.**

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