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February 10, 2023

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary  
Chair, Ways and Means Committee  
Vice Chair Jheanelle K. Wilkins  
House Office Building, Room 131  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegates Atterbeary and Wilkins:

I am writing in support of HB 551 – The Broadband Expansion Incentive Act of 2023. I believe HB 551 will not only boost Maryland’s economy, it will also address an equity issue by increasing broadband access to under-resourced communities.

As the President of the Community College of Baltimore County, I’ve seen first-hand how the digital divide impacts students. During the pandemic, it was critical for CCBC to remain fully open to serve and support students who lacked access to the technology needed for successful online learning. To make up for their lack, we at CCBC made sure students had access to online learning laboratories on the campuses. We increased campus Wi Fi for stronger connections throughout our buildings and our parking lots. We also partnered with Comcast to offer students broadband access at a reduced cost. Without access to broadband, thousands of our students would have been forced to halt their academic journeys.

I urge you to approve HB 551 for I believe the benefits far outweigh the costs. Economically the region wins because a digitally connected populace makes Maryland more attractive to businesses. The bill also helps us chip away at the digital divide, providing new opportunities for under-resourced communities. Post-pandemic, the expectation that broadband is accessible everywhere is basically the norm. To give Maryland a competitive edge, I urge the passage of HB 551.

Sincerely,

Sandra L. Kurtinitis, Ph.D.  
President

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