



BALTIMORE  
**DIGITAL  
EQUITY**  
COALITION

**Cody L. Dorsey**  
Executive Director

**Bill Title:** The Broadband Expansion Incentive Act of 2023

**Hearing Date:** February 16, 2023 — Ways and Means Committee

**ADVISORY  
BOARD:**

**Chair:** The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary; **Vice Chair:** The Honorable Jheanelle Wilkins

**Seema Iyer, Ph.D.**  
Chair

On behalf of the Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition, I write to you today in **support** of House Bill 551. Marylanders in every corner of the State rely on the Internet to access vital services, and the digital divide continues to impact public education, workforce, and the healthcare sector — among others. Despite Maryland being ranked the wealthiest State, in 2023, our people, especially those in rural and urban areas, still face difficulties in accessing the Internet. All Marylanders, no matter what zip code they live in, should have access to high-quality Internet.

**Andrew Coy**

**Chrissie Powell**

This legislation that Governor Wes Moore is presenting to the General Assembly is focused on increasing digital equity and inclusion in Maryland. The resources provided in House Bill 551 will help residents from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, and in my hometown of Baltimore. Investment in world class, high speed broadband infrastructure all across Maryland remains a necessity and this incentive legislation will give us a once-in-a-decade opportunity to capitalize on record setting investment that has been made.

The COVID-19 Pandemic underscored the level of disconnectivity in our communities and found that residents are not only placed at a disadvantaged, but are also excluded from opportunity. According to an analysis of the American Community Survey, 23% of Maryland households do not have broadband service at home. These gaps are predominantly burdensome on Black households, with this demographic representing approximately 40% of all disconnected households.

The Broadband Expansion Incentive Act of 2023 will prove vital in closing digital adoption gaps. Access to technology, the Internet, and digital skills training is critical to everyone's success in the 21st Century.

In efforts to close the digital divide — and increase economic opportunity — we hope that you will move for a **favorable** report of House Bill 551.

Respectfully submitted,

Cody L. Dorsey  
Executive Director  
Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition

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**Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition**

1600 W. 41st Street, Suite 700, Baltimore, Maryland 21211

Email: [Cody@DigitalEquityBaltimore.org](mailto:Cody@DigitalEquityBaltimore.org)