



**TO:** Members, House Ways & Means Committee  
**FROM:** Paul Pinsky - Director, MEA  
**SUBJECT:** HB 551 - Broadband Expansion Incentive Act of 2023  
**DATE:** February 16, 2023

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**MEA Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) strongly encourages the committee to support the continued expansion of broadband access in Maryland, and the incentives for this purpose provided by House Bill 551. The committee will be presented with a great deal of testimony relating to the benefits of broadband. However, for the development of a clean-energy grid, broadband is not just beneficial, it is a necessity.

The proliferation of broadband technology has created a paradigm shift in the way information travels. Broadband has made us, as a society, more adaptable. During the course of the national health emergency caused by the spread of Covid-19, Maryland State agencies were able to quickly shift to a teleworking-based operations model. In-person meetings were exchanged for virtual ones, commutes were eliminated as were greenhouse gas emissions, and documents and ideas were exchanged nearly instantaneously, all thanks to broadband technology.

For the energy sector, and especially for the clean energy future Maryland has promised its citizens, broadband is indispensable. In order to coordinate the fluctuating power generated by the many renewable energy generation installations that are replacing traditional fossil fueled power plants, data must be exchanged rapidly. Broadband connections for new clean and renewable generation is the new industry standard, as it allows for utilities and transmission grid operators to more quickly detect fluctuations in energy demand, and just as quickly dispatch or disengage generation as needed to ensure the stability of the electricity grid.

The need for rapid data transfer for grid operators will only be increased as Maryland begins to further integrate distributed energy resources, energy storage assets, virtual power plant models, and emerging technologies like vehicle-to-grid (V2G). For these technologies to be truly integrated, Maryland needs a robust and complete broadband network.

For the forgoing reasons, MEA is asking the committee for an **FAVORABLE** report.