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## **HB 551 Broadband Expansion Incentive Act of 2023**

House Ways and Means Committee

**FAVORABLE**

February 16, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Atterbeary and members of the House and Means Committee. My name is Tammy Bresnahan. I am the Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP MD. AARP is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the interests of Americans age 50 and older and their families. Key priorities of our organization include helping all Marylanders achieve financial and health security. AARP MD and its almost 870,000 members support **HB 551 Broadband Expansion Incentive Act 2023**. AARP is working hard to strengthen retirement security for all Americans by ensuring that workers and retirees have access to services and resources they need to age in place.

HB 551 allows a subtraction modification under the Maryland income tax for broadband grants awarded during the taxable year for broadband deployment and provides an exemption from the sales and use tax for the sale of equipment related to providing Internet service and deploying broadband.

Everyone should have affordable and reliable high-speed internet access in the home, regardless of such factors as geography, race, ethnicity, income, age, and ability level. This includes people living in underserved communities where high-speed internet is not deployed, as well as those who cannot afford service where it is available. AARP believes that policymakers should consider using grants, loans, tax credits, and other incentives to ensure that as many people as possible receive the benefits of high-speed internet. These policies should incorporate consumer protections and should not shift costs or place an unfair burden on taxpayers or ratepayers.

AARP Maryland looks forward to working with all of you in enacting and implementing policies addressed in HB 551 - that preserve and support this economic engine. Addressing the digital divide requires a commitment to digital equity. That is, everyone—regardless of factors such as age, race, ethnicity, ability level, and geography—should have access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet service.

AARP Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report for HB 551. Thank you! For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy at [tbresnahan@aarp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@aarp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.

