



TESTIMONY
HOUSE BILL 382
House Economic Matters Committee
February 12, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Valderrama and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland’s community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non- profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland’s urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

CDN is part of a group of advocates in Maryland that helped to pass the [Digital Connectivity Act of 2021](#) (SB 66/HB 970) in 2021, to establish the [Office of Statewide Broadband](#) (OSB) within the Maryland DHCD. It replaced the Office of Rural Broadband, with a goal to ensure all Marylanders have access to affordable, high-speed internet by 2026. Many remain disconnected.

HB 382 – Requires broadband providers to establish programs offering low-cost service options to eligible low-income consumers. Mandates that these low-cost options meet specific performance benchmarks, price thresholds, and prohibits providers from requiring automatic payment plans. The bill also establishes a Broadband Affordability Advisory Board to monitor compliance and report on the effectiveness of these programs.

High-speed Internet service powers education and the economy. It supports access to health care and education, and it connects communities. People without Internet service are forced to go without necessities. Access to government services requires an email address. Rural communities, communities of color, and low-income residents in Maryland see lower rates of access to and adoption of high-speed Internet service.

As illustrated by the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance interactive [map on our website](#) – developed by expert John B. Horrigan, Ph.d in partnership with the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance despite progress made in the last five years, the digital divide persists across Maryland, across racial and socioeconomic lines, exacerbated by COVID-19, and disproportionately affecting underinvested, historically Black and Latino communities.

Digital equity is not only a means to empower individuals and communities but also a vital catalyst for achieving broader economic goals. The state of digital equity in Maryland reflects both progress and remaining challenges, particularly regarding broadband access, device availability, digital skills training, and racial disparities. To advance digital equity, this bill seeks to level the playing field by ensuring that low-income residents gain access to the digital resources and opportunities that are integral to today's society.

Digital access is critical for economic growth in Maryland.

We urge your favorable report for HB 382.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network