

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

### Senate Bill 571 - Maryland Broadband Opportunity and Fairness Act

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 571.

I offer this testimony as a municipal leader serving residents who experience firsthand how access to reliable broadband determines whether families can participate fully in education, employment, health services, and civic life. Broadband connectivity is no longer a luxury. It is essential infrastructure supporting economic mobility and community stability.

Senate Bill 571 takes an important step toward closing Maryland's digital divide by requiring broadband providers to establish low income consumer programs and by strengthening statewide transparency and reporting. These measures recognize that access alone is not enough. Affordability and awareness must accompany infrastructure investment.

In municipalities across Prince George's County and throughout Maryland, local governments continue to see students completing homework in parking lots, seniors unable to access telehealth services, and small businesses limited by inconsistent connectivity. Policies that expand affordable broadband directly strengthen workforce participation and long term economic resilience.

While I strongly support the intent of this legislation, several amendments would improve implementation and ensure equitable outcomes.

First, municipalities should be formally included as implementation partners to assist with outreach and enrollment. Local governments maintain the closest relationship with residents and are essential to successful adoption.

Second, the definition of low cost broadband should include clearer affordability benchmarks to ensure programs remain accessible to working families.

Third, any flexibility granted to providers regarding service speeds should include equity safeguards so historically underserved communities are not left behind.

With these amendments, Senate Bill 571 will advance fairness while maintaining accountability and measurable results for Maryland residents.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments on Senate Bill 571.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Dr. Cashenna A. Cross  
Councilwoman At Large  
City of Glenarden