

To the members of the General Assembly:

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing racial and socioeconomic inequities in Maryland. In an increasingly digital world, access to technology is vitally important for connection to educational curricula, job opportunities, health care, and relationships with loved ones.

The [2013 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census](#) shows that lower-income and Black and Brown households are disproportionately disconnected from the internet. Furthermore, [we know that Black and Latinx students are more likely to not have access to the prerequisites of learning—devices, internet access, and live contact with teachers](#). If we don't take action now, further learning loss and economic exclusion will translate into a wider opportunity gap and a decrease in Maryland's future economic growth potential.

**The Digital Connectivity Act of 2021 (HB0097/SB0066)** establishes the Office of Digital Inclusion and devotes capacity and funding for broadband access to all 24 Maryland jurisdictions. Increased broadband access creates new jobs, expands markets for new and existing businesses, enables access to educational opportunities and resources and facilitates delivery of health care services. As a result, It will improve long-term quality of life for all Marylanders and ensure that the State remains economically competitive both locally and globally.

This act also collects critical data around the root causes of digital inequity. We believe that this knowledge is necessary towards creating further policy solutions which will eradicate digital inequity.

The undersigned organizations composed of parents, educators, students and community leaders and groups urgently **call on the State Legislature to pass the Digital Connectivity Act of 2021 to address this immediate and pressing need.**

The crises in education and economic immobility began long before COVID-19. We must keep the gap from widening. We must act to equip all communities with the requisite digital tools, resources, and support for immediate and long term success.

With Urgency - <sup>1</sup>

Natasha Escobar, Executive Chair  
Baltimoreans for Educational Equity (BEE)

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<sup>1</sup>Organizations can join this letter of support via this [sign on form](#).  
If you are an individual, you can show your support by [signing this petition](#).

**Undersigned Organizations & Agencies:**

Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY)  
AFSCME Maryland Council 3  
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Maryland  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Maryland  
Anne Arundel County Literacy Council, Inc.  
Arts Education in Maryland Schools  
Arts Every Day  
Attendance Works  
Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition (BDEC)  
Baltimoreans for Educational Equity (BEE)  
Baltimore City Health Department  
Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF)  
Baltimore Family Alliance  
Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU)  
Betsy Dinkins Simon (BDS) Healthy Aging Networks  
CASA  
Catalyte  
Disability Rights Maryland  
The Education Trust  
Greatest Possible Good  
Hinkey-Benson Family Fund  
Impact Hub Baltimore  
League of Women Voters-Maryland  
Libraries Without Borders  
Living Classrooms  
Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)  
Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)  
Maryland Association of Counties (MACO)  
Maryland Alliance Of Public Charter Schools  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy  
Maryland Coalition for Homeless Children and Families  
Maryland Education Coalition (MEC)  
Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)  
Maryland State Family Child Care Association  
Maryland Out of School Time Network  
Office of Kristerfer Burnett, Baltimore City Council District 8  
Office of Zeke Cohen, Baltimore City Council District 1  
Open Works  
Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB) for Baltimore City Public Schools  
PCs for People Maryland  
Public Schools Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM)  
Project Waves  
SEIU 500  
SEIU 1199  
SmartLogic  
Urban Teachers  
Teachers' Democracy Project  
The Parents' Place of MD  
Strong Schools Maryland  
Writers in Baltimore Schools  
Waller Gallery  
Warnock Foundation