

2021-01-22 Digital Connectivity Act testimony

To: The members of the Economic Matters Committee

From: Yair Flicker, President and Founder, SmartLogic

January 22, 2021

Good afternoon; thank you to Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Yair Flicker, I am the President and founder of SmartLogic, a Baltimore-based software development company that's been in operation since 2005.

Working in the software development industry, it is clear to me that access to the internet is critical for participation in modern society, from education, to healthcare, to professional opportunities. Ubiquitous internet access also has a tremendous impact on economic opportunity for citizens of Baltimore and the state of Maryland at large.

Cities and states around the country that have invested in high speed network infrastructure have attracted tech companies and are seeing increased economic growth. Likewise, the businesses who have survived and thrived during the pandemic have largely been internet enabled.

It is a simple fact that we cannot expect current and future generations to thrive without access to high speed internet, whether urban, rural, or in between. Internet skills and access are foundational to a wide range of career opportunities in the tech industry and beyond. I see this everyday. We struggle to hire young people from low income minority communities. It is evident, even more so, that internet access and literacy is key to economic opportunity. If you do not know how to use the internet or lack broadband access, you are simply cut off from an increasing number of possible work and career opportunities.

Inclusive access to high-speed internet strengthens Maryland's economic future and increases social mobility. It seeks to address the wealth gap experienced in lower income

communities, and fosters growth in Maryland's tech industry by empowering a diverse workforce with the skills needed for success in the modern economy.

I wholeheartedly support this bill and encourage the committee to pass it and pave the way for a more equitable future for all of Maryland's citizens.