



190 West Ostend St., #201
Baltimore, MD 21230
Phone: 410.547.1515
Fax: 410.837.5436

Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 97 – Department of Housing and Community Development –
Office of Digital Inclusion – Established (Digital Connectivity Act of 2021)
Support

AFSCME Council 3 represents 30,000 State and Higher Education employees in Maryland. HB 97 establishes an Office of Digital Inclusion under the Department of Housing and Community Development that will be tasked with ensuring that every Marylander has access to affordable and high-quality broadband internet services. Our members reside in every jurisdiction in Maryland, and the lack of access to quality and affordable broadband is an obstacle in both rural and urban areas. AFSCME Council 3 supports HB 97 because it works to address long-standing equity issues with access to broadband. The digital divide excludes communities along racial, economic, and age lines. Many of the services AFSCME Council 3 members provide in our state government and at public universities are now accessible over the internet. AFSCME Council 3 believes that our state has an obligation to ensure all Marylanders can access these important public services without barriers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also amplified the necessity of workers to have access to high-quality broadband in their homes. While teleworking, AFSCME Council 3 members have continued the vital work of processing unemployment claims, distributing SNAP benefits, assisting students with their enrollment questions, and monitoring domestic violence cases all while struggling to secure consistent access to quality internet. Additionally, with children also at home engaging in remote learning, many AFSCME 3 members who are teleworking are experiencing increasingly unaffordable internet bills and data caps.

HB 97 is important legislation to force the continued prioritization of expanding affordable, high-quality broadband to the hundreds of thousands of Marylanders statewide who continue to lack access. AFSCME Council 3 asks for a favorable report on HB 97.

Every AFSCME Maryland State and University contract guarantees a right to union representation.
An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
800.492.1996

Find us: afscmemd.org
Like us: facebook.com/AFSCMEMD
Follow/Tweet us: [@afscmemaryland](https://twitter.com/afscmemaryland)