



House Bill 97 – Department of Housing and Community Development - Office of Digital Inclusion - Established (Digital Connectivity Act of 2021)

Position: Support

Maryland REALTORS® support HB 97, which establishes the Office of Digital Inclusion and directs the development of a plan to provide broadband services statewide by the end of 2029.

High-speed internet is an important and needed service which has become essential to daily life. This has become particularly apparent during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as many employers have transitioned their workers from on-site work to telework and schools have transitioned students to distance learning.

Communities prosper when they gain access to high-speed Internet. Recent studies show that access to high-speed internet increases property values anywhere from 3-6%. The absence of broadband makes a community a less attractive location for new investment and prevents residents from locating in rural areas. Furthermore, availability of “new economy” jobs is impossible in a community with little or no broadband access.

High-speed internet is a crucial tool for housing Maryland’s residents. Consumers increasingly use online services for at least a part of the buying or selling process. In 2020, some buyers completed their home purchase without ever setting foot inside the dwelling, thanks to modern technology. Even before the current pandemic restrictions, many REALTORS® have experienced buyers cancelling a home purchase because the property lacked access to high-speed internet.

In the future, new technologies will be adopted that will only increase reliance on the availability of fast, efficient and cost-effective access to broadband services. For this reason, Maryland REALTORS® recommend a favorable report on HB 97.

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