



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chair  
Delegate Kathleen M. Dumais, Vice Chair  
Economic Matters Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: January 26, 2021

RE: HB97 Department of Housing and Community Development –  
Office of Digital Inclusion – Established (Digital Connectivity Act  
of 2021)

### **The MLLC supports HB97 Department of Housing and Community Development – Office of Digital Inclusion – Established (Digital Connectivity Act of 2021).**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB97.

In a society where most things operate through websites and applications, internet access is crucial for most daily activities. Far too many Americans still do not have access to the technology and affordable high-speed broadband they need to succeed in today's economy. High speed internet enables job opportunities, educational resources, the ability to connect virtually with loved ones, and to make appointments and consults with healthcare providers.

A vast majority of Maryland's population has internet service. However, there are large populations in our state that lack adequate or any internet service. About [324,000 Maryland residents](#) in rural areas do not have access to high-speed internet and nearly [41% of Baltimore City homes](#) do not have any internet. Additionally, many [Baltimore City households](#) are low-income families that also not own a computer or laptop. This clear digital divide that also tends to hurt Black and Brown communities, establishes obstacles for educational attainment, financial growth, and access to healthcare resources. The legislature can remedy this impediment.

HB97 expands the scope of the Office of Rural Broadband to become a statewide Office of Digital Connectivity focused on ensuring that all Marylanders, whether rural or urban, have access to reliable, universal, high-quality, and high-speed internet service at an affordable price. With our current economic and health crisis, it is the precise time to find a statewide solution that addresses all Marylanders' internet needs.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on HB97.