



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Senator Clarence K. Lam, Senate Delegation Chair
Howard County Delegation
420 Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Courtney Watson, House Delegation Chair
Howard County Delegation
216 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT:** Ho. Co. Legislative Bond Initiative: Public Wi-Fi Access and Expansion

Dear Chair Lam, Chair Watson and Delegation Members,

I am proud to express my support for this project, which would support increased public Wi-Fi access and expansion.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of closing the digital divide in our county and our state. Access to affordable Wi-Fi can help our residents obtain the online tools, services, and supports they need to learn and grow. Too often, socio-economic factors and difficulties bringing fiber to certain areas of Howard County can prevent residents from accessing public internet. This bond bill seeks to address this challenge by increasing public Wi-Fi where our residents go to exercise, play, and access government services.

I am committed to advancing digital equity and inclusion in Howard County through our Transform Howard initiative. This bond initiative will complement these efforts by providing free public Wi-Fi and middle mile fiber to approximately 50 county parks and facilities. If more residents can access free internet, they will be able to ensure that their online needs are met.

As Howard County addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a stronger digital infrastructure will support an equitable recovery. I urge your support for this project so that all Howard County residents can benefit from free and accessible internet access when they need it.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive