MARYLAND BROADBAND COOPERATIVE
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September 29, 2022

Hon. Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Incorporated (MdBC) by this letter expresses its strong support for the application of Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) for funding for its *Connected Community – Middle Mile* project through the U.S. Department of Commerce / National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) "Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program" (Middle Mile Program).

Maryland Broadband Cooperative is a not-for-profit 501(c)12 charged with offering, through our members, expanded and world-class network services around the state. Our Mission is to drive network capacity & connectivity through universal, open access to broadband services via a fiber-optic network that serves rural Maryland by building an advanced, world-class broadband network across the rural communities of Eastern Shore, Southern, and Western Maryland supported by its Members who provide Last Mile service. We have two decades of experience building middle mile fiber and existing Last Mile ISP relationships, and therefore deeply understand the importance of having robust fiber optic networks across the state of Maryland as necessary for connectivity for all residents and to improve access and affordability in underserved areas as well. We strongly believe in partnerships, customer choice and competition as being in the best interests of end users and the only way that the state of Maryland will achieve its ambitious Legislative goal of ensuring universal broadband to everyone in every single corner of the state by no later than 2025. It is in that spirit that MdBC views BGE as a unique and exciting middle mile fiber partner that could bring more comprehensive, redundant, and resilient broadband to Maryland when network planning is done strategically, collaboratively, and early. MdBC supports this project as complementary to our own Middle Mile Broadband Grant application project, and unique in that it emphasizes underserved communities and digital equity in southern Maryland, while we tackle rural broadband challenges in northern and eastern Maryland.

Through its Middle Mile project, BGE will leverage its utility transmission Rights of Way corridors to deploy a fiber backbone across central Maryland, to both: (1) support reliability and resilience of its energy delivery system – enabling, in part, new clean energy technologies such as solar, electric vehicles and more; and to (2) improve affordability, access and resiliency of internet service for communities, anchor institutions, internet service providers and other data carriers – through both last mile community and institution partnerships as well as dark fiber leasing opportunities.

As an experienced middle mile fiber provided, MdBC validates that this solution is well thought out and with technical advantages. Additionally, BGE's Middle Mile fiber backbone aligns well with MdBCs in a variety of ways, including:

- This project strategically compliments our own IIJA Middle Mile Broadband Grant application due its geographic diversity of route (southern MD) and emphasis on underserved, not just unserved, residents
- This project creates options and potential redundancy for our existing fiber optic networks, which would lead to improving communications resiliency across Maryland
- Potential for future partnerships that could help MdBC deliver solutions to communities more quickly and/or more cost effectively by leveraging BGE's IIJA Middle Mile broadband Grant project
- Alignment in mission to promote high-speed, affordable internet for end users and enable more Last Mile ISP options in Maryland

BGE's Middle Mile project illustrates the strong potential for innovative, transformational public-private partnerships that can help local communities and institutions. Maryland Broadband Cooperative urges the NTIA to approve BGE's application for funding, emphasizing that BGE's Middle Mile project's middle mile infrastructure will benefit disadvantaged communities along these routes by enabling high-speed, high bandwidth internet by connecting un/underserved and improving affordability in our market; this program will reduce interconnection costs for last-mile providers and provide opportunities for competitive providers to offer last-mile service.], a key prioritization criteria for NTIA's Middle Mile Program. MdBC looks forward to continuing to discuss middle mile and last mile opportunities with BGE in order to make the vision of a more connected Maryland a reality.

Sincerely,

Drew Van Dopp
President & CEO
Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Incorporated