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September 20, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County is pleased to share its strong support for the application of Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) for funding 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).

UMBC is a leading public research university known for innovative teaching, high-impact research across disciplines, and a supportive community that includes and inspires inquisitive minds from all backgrounds. The University serves 14,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

Through its Middle Mile project, BGE will leverage its utility transmission corridors to deploy a fiber backbone across central Maryland to (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 (2) to 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.

Our campus is excited to be a potential last mile connection partner through BGE's Middle Mile project, because this proposed middle mile fiber backbone aligns well with UMBC's own plans and role in serving the citizens of Maryland. UMBC presently operates three facilities in BGE's region: our original campus in Catonsville, which includes the bwtech@UMBC Research and Technology Park, housing 131 companies; the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET), located in Baltimore's Inner Harbor, supporting marine environmental research; and UMBC Training Centers, an affiliated business entity of UMBC located in Columbia, providing professional and technical training to government agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses. Each of these organizations is critically dependent on the Internet for research and instruction. Linking these facilities through BGE's proposed infrastructure will add resilience and allow us to expand partnerships and collaborations, especially those supporting economic development, workforce needs, or research collaborations.

As one of three Maryland Carnegie-designated Very High Research Institutions (often referred to as Carnegie Research 1), UMBC strives to live up to our motto of ***Public Research for the Public Good.*** Our key research and creative achievement themes are well aligned with regional and national priorities – environmental and space sciences, health and life sciences, data sciences and national security, and education. UMBC is a Baltimore hub for our state government network, networkMaryland, and the Maryland Research and Education Network (MDREN). In addition, UMBC is a founding member of the Maryland Mid-Atlantic eXchange (MAX) Gigapop and is an original member of Internet2, formerly titled the University Corporation for Advanced Internet

Development (UCAID), which was created to allow universities to evolve the Internet to the advanced needs of the research and education community. Having access to dedicated fiber is critical for our research mission and for faculty to investigate and develop next generation technologies and solutions.

BGE's Middle Mile project illustrates the strong potential for innovative, transformational public-private partnerships that can strengthen local communities and institutions. UMBC asks the NTIA to give BGE's application for funding strong consideration, as BGE's Middle Mile project may provide benefits to support UMBC's research, education, and public service mission by providing infrastructure that would be unavailable or unaffordable to our institution, a key prioritization criterion for NTIA's Middle Mile Program. UMBC looks forward to continuing to discuss last mile opportunities with BGE in order to make the vision of a more connected Maryland a reality.

Sincerely,

Valerie Sheares Ashby
President