CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT, MAYOR

BALTIMORE CITY OFFICE OF INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY

Todd Carter, CIO & CDO
401 E. Fayette Street, 3rd Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

September 30, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

The City of Baltimore, our Mayor Brandon Scott, and our Office of Broadband and Digital Equity (Baltimore City) 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).

The City of Baltimore is home to over 585,000 residents and a diverse business community. The Mayor has developed an Action Plan for Baltimore focusing on building public safety, equitable neighborhood development, prioritizing our youth, and building clean and healthy communities. Access to high-speed, reliable, and affordable internet for every resident is a critical, foundational component of the Mayor's plan to close the digital divide. Building fiber just for connectivity and access is not enough; we must also focus on the underserved to promote equity and support communities who have historically been left behind. This IIJA opportunity can do this by helping to lower costs of internet service providers, increasing customer choices and affordable options for high-speed broadband, as well as expanding the partner ecosystem for broadband in Baltimore City and across Maryland.

Through its Middle Mile project, BGE will leverage its utility transmission 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 a potential municipal and last mile connection partner through BGE's Middle Mile project, BGE's proposed middle mile fiber backbone aligns well with Baltimore City's broadband and digital equity objectives in several ways, including:

- Building affordable middle mile and last mile solutions for underserved and economically disadvantaged populations in Baltimore City;

- Deploying low-cost middle mile fiber to lower the cost of entry for new Internet Service Providers (ISPs) could provide low-cost, high-speed broadband options for our residents and businesses;

- Baltimore City will benefit by bringing new ISPs to the Baltimore region thereby increasing competition;

- Findings from this project will be transferrable to future projects and demonstrations where Baltimore City views BGE, and its infrastructure, as a key enabling partner; and

- Providing a potential opportunity to add resiliency and redundancy to Baltimore City's own municipal fiber optic network, which supports many critical municipal offices and functions as well as several community broadband initiatives.

BGE's Middle Mile project illustrates the strong potential for innovative, transformational public-private partnerships to help local communities and institutions. Baltimore City urges the NTIA to approve BGE's application for funding, emphasizing BGE's Middle Mile project's middle mile infrastructure will contribute to digital equity and inclusion in Baltimore City by 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 criterion for NTIA's Middle Mile Program. Baltimore City looks forward to continuing to discuss last mile opportunities with BGE to make the vision of a more connected Maryland a reality.

Sincerely,

Todd A. Carter

Todd Carter
Chief Information Officer & Chief Development Officer
City of Baltimore

cc: Kenya Asli, Director, Broadband & Digital Equity
Natasha Mehu, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Nina Themelis, Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations