Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D.
President

Henry Administration Bldg., Ste. 2000
14000 Jericho Park Rd, Bowie, MD 20715
P 301-860-3555
F 301-860-3510
E president@bowiestate.edu
bowiestate.edu

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

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

Bowie State University 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).

Founded in 1865, Bowie State is the oldest Historically Black College/University in Maryland and one of the ten oldest in the country. It is also a diverse university whose students, along with faculty and staff, represent many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As a member institution of the University System of Maryland, Bowie State provides high-quality and affordable educational opportunities for students with ambitions to achieve and succeed.

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 last mile connection partner through BGE's Middle Mile project, BGE's proposed middle mile fiber backbone aligns well with Bowie State's own plans and role as a premier educational institution. First, BGE's project may provide an opportunity to add resiliency and redundancy to the fiber optic network Bowie State relies on to support our faculty, students and community. In addition to the critical need that access to data and information plays in our ability to empower our students with a world class education, it is important to note our particular expertise in cyberspace and information technology. Of importance, Bowie State is a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education, and the National Security Agency (NSA) has validated Bowie State's undergraduate computer science degree with specialization in cybersecurity as a program of excellence through academic year 2027. This new

designation certifies that the BSU program meets enhanced academic and research standards to help expand the cybersecurity workforce. BSU was first recognized by NSA as a center of academic excellence in 2015 under an earlier certification program. In short, Bowie State not only values the need for critical internet infrastructure to provide the tools to be connected in education, but is creating the workforce and research leaders of tomorrow in the internet infrastructure space. Taken together, Bowie State has a strong interest in and alignment with BGE's Middle Mile project.

BGE's Middle Mile project illustrates the strong potential for innovative, transformational public-private partnerships that can help local communities and institutions. Bowie State urges the NTIA to approve BGE's application for funding, emphasizing that BGE's Middle Mile project. Bowie State University 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,

Aminta H. Breaux