March 7, 2023

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel:

We bring your attention to accuracy challenges submitted by the State of Maryland to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s National Broadband Map. Guaranteeing all Americans access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet is a shared goal, and we appreciate the FCC's commitment to this endeavor. To that end, we urge your agency to update and improve its broadband mapping data based on the feedback from our state's broadband office.

We in the Senate cosponsored the Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability Act (Broadband DATA Act) that mandated the creation of the National Broadband Map, a crucial tool for understanding the state of broadband access in the country and appropriately directing federal funding to increase connectivity and address the digital divide. However, on the initial draft, Maryland's broadband map dataset undercounts underserved and unserved households. The Office of Statewide Broadband (OSB) found approximately 3,800 addresses incorrectly identified as serviceable by internet service providers (ISPs) compared to the state's information on unserved locations. The OSB submitted feedback as part of the challenge process to improve the accuracy of the FCC's service availability data. This challenge process is a key component in creating a reliable dataset to determine the allocation of billions of dollars in broadband funding from the historic Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The OSB and other state broadband agencies report that extended challenge time would allow for a more thorough analysis and identification of additional unserved households. The stakes are high: Inaccurate data will result in unfair funding allocations. As such, we ask the FCC to consider reviewing additional data from states through the end of March.

While federal efforts are already making strides to connect every corner of Maryland, challenges remain. Over 183,000 Maryland households have enrolled in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which offers high-speed internet plans at low or no cost. In December 2022, the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced that Maryland received its first "Internet for All" grants—close to $6 million —to support the state's work deploying high-speed internet networks, developing digital skills training programs, connecting with communities without access, and improving digital inclusion. These initiatives are meaningful for Maryland families. For many, particularly in urban and suburban areas, the high cost of broadband has prevented them from acquiring the service. Families in rural areas, like in parts of Western Maryland and Maryland's Eastern Shore, face

greater distances to existing broadband infrastructure and fewer potential ISP customers per mile.

We recognize that the development and maintenance of the Nationwide Broadband Map is an ongoing, iterative process and understand that state feedback is critical to ensure accuracy. As the FCC implements the Broadband DATA Act, we look forward to working with you to consider whether current data collection efforts are sufficient to address mapping issues and whether additional legislative action is needed to incorporate other variables into the FCC's collection efforts.

Thank you for considering Maryland's feedback. We look forward to supporting your continued efforts to ensure that all Americans have access to the opportunities and benefits of the digital age.
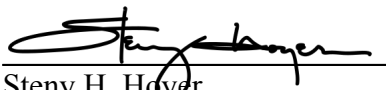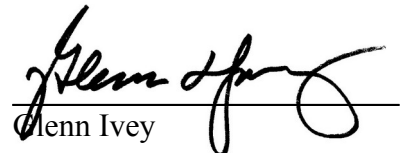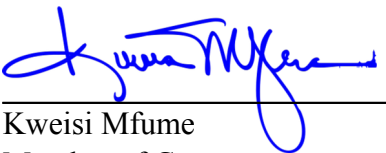
Sincerely,

Chris Van Hollen
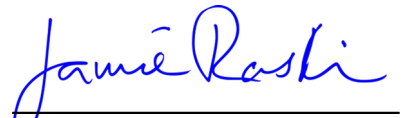United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
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