



Legislation Text

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Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Cohen

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Request for Federal Action - Pass the Anti-Digital Redlining Act of 2021

For the purpose of urging President Joseph R. Biden and the United States Congress to pass and enact the Anti-Digital Redlining Act of 2021 to establish the criteria to be used by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to identify and dismantle digital redlining. .

Recitals

Whereas, access to broadband Internet can no longer be treated as a private luxury reserved for the few but an essential utility such as electric, water and sewer;

Whereas, according to the Abell Foundation's April 2020 report "Baltimore's Digital Divide: Gaps in Internet Connectivity and the Impact on Low-income City Residents", more than 40% of households in Baltimore lack access to a home Internet connection;

Whereas, the same report found that while 73% of White households in Baltimore could get online at home, only 50% of Black households could;

Whereas, at the start of 2021, a Pew Research Center survey demonstrated the lack of affordable, accessible broadband can be seen in low-income communities across the country, with 43% of adults with lower incomes reporting not having home broadband services, compared to only 7% of adults in households earning \$100,000 or more a year;

Whereas, the same survey found 80% of White adults reported having access to home broadband services, compared to 71% and 65% for Black and Hispanic adults, respectively;

Whereas, in April 2020, the Pew Research Center found that 59% of U.S. parents with lower incomes whose children were remote learning said they faced one of three digital obstacles to their schooling: lack of reliable internet, no home computer, or the need to use a smartphone to complete coursework;

* **Warning:** This is an unofficial, introductory copy of the bill.
The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Whereas, the American Society of Law, Medicine, and Ethics (ASLME), found that approximately 24 million people in the United States live in "digital deserts" without broadband access, including approximately 19 million rural Americans and 1.4 million Americans living on Tribal lands;

Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified inequities created by Digital Redlining in urban and rural areas across the country;

Whereas, Baltimore City has recognized the need to address Digital Redlining as a significant priority through the allocation of \$3,000,000 from the Children and Youth Fund in the Spring of 2020 to ensure students have learning-appropriate devices;

Whereas, Baltimore City has demonstrated a commitment to long-term solutions for connectivity and technology education through the appointment of the Director of Broadband and Digital Inclusion within the Mayor's Office;

Whereas, Baltimore's youth have demonstrated their leadership in organizing, proposing, and advocating for solutions to connectivity and digital literacy gaps on local, state, and national levels, showing a capacity to understand these challenges and respond to them using models established by Students Organizing a Multicultural and Open Society (SOMOS);

Whereas, the Baltimore community has actionably convened around issues related to the Digital Divide, with more than 60 organizations collaborating to form the Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition, informing funding, policy and service delivery decisions which have improved the lives of countless Baltimore residents;

Whereas, the pandemic has made abundantly clear the critical role high-quality internet plays in our everyday lives;

Whereas, the Anti-Digital Redlining Act allows the FCC to investigate discriminatory practices related to the provision of internet services based on income, race, color, religion, national origin, and other factors within a geographic area;

Whereas, the Anti-Digital Redlining Act provides the FCC with the enforcement authority to require interconnection and cooperation among multiple ISPs to provide service to areas that are identified as digitally redlined;

Whereas, the Anti-Digital Redlining Act will additionally prohibit ISPs from entering exclusive agreements with multi-dwelling units or landlords that would limit competition, consumer choice, or favor any particular provider;

Whereas, through the Anti-Digital Redlining Act, the FCC will also analyze the use of franchising agreements between telecommunications providers and municipal governments, and the FCC will produce an annual public report with the findings;

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council urges President Joseph R. Biden and the United States Congress to pass and enact the Anti-Digital Redlining Act of 2021 to eliminate discriminatory practices related to the provision of internet services and to create broadband equity.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the President of the United States, the

Vice President of the United States, the Mayor, the Honorable members of the Maryland delegations to the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.