

LGBT Technology Partnership

February 19, 2019

House Economic Matters Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building 231
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for Maryland HB 654

Honorable Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

The LGBT Technology Partnership (LGBT Tech) is a national, nonpartisan group that advocates on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities and is committed to providing resources to homeless LGBT youth and closing the digital divide. We write you today in support of Maryland HB 654 because wireless network deployment is vital for keeping our communities connected to critical services as well as accessing and leveraging innovative applications in education, and government/social services.

Passage of this bill would have a positive impact on our community, many of whom do not have landline service and rely exclusively on wireless. Fifth-generation (5G) networks have the potential to make a tremendous impact on our communities and LGBT Tech acknowledges the importance of removing barriers to deploying 5G.

We run the PowerOn Program, where our centers distribute laptops, tablets and other mobile devices to connect unserved and underserved homeless LGBT youth with the goal of helping them to find stability, guidance, and ultimately build toward financial independence. Beyond serving as a means for finding community assistance, wireless is also about access to health and safety resources.

As a minority group, the LGBTQ community can face uphill battles when looking for a doctor—81 percent of LGBTQ youth cite the Internet as critical for securing healthcare providers and medical information. The low latency, capacity, and speeds of 5G present a stronger network that will give more Marylanders access to innovations like connected health. This means flexible and tailored treatments, access to a wider variety of specialists, and a greater market for care.

For our community, wireless is a crucial link to employment, social services, health care, and other essential resources. LGBT Tech is encouraged that the General Assembly is considering this bill, which would facilitate the deployment of small cell technology necessary to modernize the mobile networks that Marylanders rely upon. For the above reasons, LGBT Tech asks that you pass HB 654, which will allow cutting-edge wireless technologies to improve the ability to support our most vulnerable community members.

Sincerely,

Carlos Gutierrez

Carlos Gutierrez

Head of Legal and Policy Affairs

LGBT Technology Partnership

cc: Honorable Dereck E. Davis, Chair of the House Economic Matters Committee