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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Governor Hogan Announces Nearly $30 Million in Awards for Broadband InfrastructureGrant Funding Will Expand Service to More Than 12,000 Households In 18 Counties **New Carrolton MD -** (July 20, 2021) Governor Larry Hogan today announced awards to expand broadband internet access to more than 12,000 households in 18 counties. Administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development’s Office of Statewide Broadband (OSB), $29,472,131 in grant funding will support network infrastructure projects by local internet service providers that will provide connectivity to unserved or underserved communities in Maryland.  “These awards continue our ongoing efforts to make broadband access available and affordable for all Marylanders,” said Governor Hogan. “As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increased focus on ensuring internet connectivity and building infrastructure that helps bridge the current digital divide.”  These awards are the first administered by the OSB. Formerly the Governor’s Office of Rural Broadband, the OSB was established within the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development earlier this year when Governor Hogan signed into law Senate Bill 66 from the 2021 session of the Maryland General Assembly. The legislation also established the Digital Inclusion Fund and the Digital Connectivity Fund as new programs to provide grants to local governments and nonprofits. The grants will support initiatives to increase access to high-speed internet and to assist in the development of affordable broadband internet infrastructure with the stated goal of 98% universal broadband access by the end of 2025.  “Lack of access to broadband must be addressed, regardless of the reason,” said Kenrick Gordon, director of the OSB. “The Office of Statewide Broadband will partner with local governments and internet service providers to ensure connectivity in communities that lack access and, in areas with existing service, increase affordability for low-income residents ”  Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State of Maryland has administered more than $56 million in federal and state funding to support broadband access. As a response to the pandemic, the OSB provided grants to local school districts to provide connectivity to unserved students, funded additional WiFi access points for libraries to allow the community to connect, and provided $2 million in Recovery Now funding for projects in Dorchester, Harford, and Wicomico counties that were constructed in only four months.  For a full list of awardees, visit [FY21 Broadband Awards List](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTA3MjAuNDM0NDM4NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2RoY2QubWFyeWxhbmQuZ292L0RvY3VtZW50cy9QcmVzc1JlbGVhc2VzL0ZZMjEtQnJvYWRiYW5kLUdyYW50cy5wZGYifQ.oKvDYmO75KdBvW0PCppXE-qojhscHd9abwGDDQK8Y5U/s/1476152385/br/109612780738-l). For more information about the OSB and its initiatives, visit [https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Broadband](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTA3MjAuNDM0NDM4NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2RoY2QubWFyeWxhbmQuZ292L0Jyb2FkYmFuZCJ9.frcGg3aEKdxlb8xJ5-p8SP46FDLL2dQi6_qnnZVgstQ/s/1476152385/br/109612780738-l).  # # # | | | |

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