

COUNTY COUNCIL OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND

Legislative Session 2023, Legislative Day No. 19

Resolution No. 49-23

Introduced by Mr. Smith and Ms. Rodvien

By the County Council, November 6, 2023

1 RESOLUTION urging the United States Congress to renew and extend the Affordable
2 Connectivity Program

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4 WHEREAS, on December 31, 2021, the Federal Communications Commission
5 (FCC) launched the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) as part of the
6 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a longer-term program replacing the
7 Emergency Broadband Benefit which helped almost 9 million people afford
8 internet access during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

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10 WHEREAS, the ACP is a national, U.S. government program providing low-
11 income households a discount of up to \$30 per month for internet service and
12 discounts on computer device costs; and

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14 WHEREAS, eligibility includes households with income below 200% of the
15 federal poverty level or who are receiving benefits through programs such as the
16 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Supplemental
17 Security Income (SSI), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women,
18 Infants, and Children (WIC), Federal Pell Grant, or Free and Reduced-Price School
19 Lunch; and

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21 WHEREAS, the ACP, funded at \$14.2 billion, has enrolled more than 16 million
22 households, saving low-income households almost \$500 million per month; and

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24 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the reality of inequitable and
25 detrimental gaps in internet access, adoption, and affordability for underserved
26 groups and showed how our digital networks are woven into every aspect of our
27 personal and professional lives and serve as the critical backbone for our economy;
28 and

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30 WHEREAS, the ACP has been one of the most effective broadband benefit
31 programs to date with its direct-to-consumer model to enroll low-income
32 households and help ensure they can afford the internet connections they need for
33 work, school, healthcare, and more; and

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35 WHEREAS, the ACP is likely to run out of funds by mid-2024 and extending the
36 broadband benefit (not devices) for an additional five years could potentially cost
37 \$30-\$35 billion; and

1 WHEREAS, households without high-speed internet are more likely to have
2 incomes under \$25,000 and include school aged children, communities of color,
3 rural communities, and older Americans; and
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5 WHEREAS, approximately 1 in 5 Americans without home internet cite cost as the
6 factor; and
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8 WHEREAS, the lack of affordable, reliable high-speed internet is compounding
9 economic, health, and other disparities; and
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11 WHEREAS, the Biden-Harris Administration furthered its digital equity
12 commitment in 2022 and launched the \$45 billion “Internet for All” initiative to
13 bring affordable, reliable high-speed internet to everyone in America by the end of
14 the decade; and
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16 WHEREAS, the ACP has been the most important tool for counties in moving the
17 needle to close the digital divide, helping over 10,624 eligible residents in Anne
18 Arundel County; now, therefore, be it
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20 *Resolved by the County Council of Anne Arundel County, Maryland,* That it hereby
21 urges Congress to renew and extend the ACP funding in 2024 to ensure currently enrolled
22 ACP low-income households continue to have access to affordable high-speed internet,
23 recognizing that closing the digital divide will allow Americans access to the resources
24 they need and strengthen the U.S. economy to compete in the 21st Century; and be it further
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26 *Resolved,* That a copy of this Resolution be sent to U.S. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin
27 and Christopher Van Hollen, Jr.; U.S. Representatives C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger III, John
28 P. Sarbanes, Glenn F. Ivey, and Steny H. Hoyer; and County Executive Steuart Pittman.