

Chair Garvey, Board Members

I'm concerned this feasibility study to serve Gates of Ballston and Arlington View Terrace comprising 542 units is too limited.

Last April, retired EL teachers heard that many EL students were unable to connect for distance learning. They began volunteer tutoring 1:1 online. I'm one of these 24 tutors who call ourselves Abuelitas or Grandmas. We found out many students had no internet access but for a cell phone. Our only means to tutor was WhatsApp on our phones—and that is difficult. This fall, we heard of parents so frustrated with getting online with APS-provided devices and Internet Essentials they were ready to give up. Other students we have lost touch with.

APS reports that 97% of households now have internet access, but that means about 750 households with students are still without access. Many more were already denied a free public

education from March to June in the spring. Since classes began in fall, APS teachers and staff have worked very hard to help students get connected on APS devices and extra County funding. Nevertheless, too many households are still left out.

This study could result in 500+ more households having real internet access. But, frankly, it's too late and not good enough. I know you understand the urgency of extending access to all qualifying households, but what about small businesses, and first-generation college students? We advocates believe that a Broadband Authority will be a better, faster and cheaper solution to what is an egregious shortcoming in our community.

Kathy Scruggs

10/20/2020