



June 3, 2021

Good morning, Chairwoman Bok, Vice Chairwoman Essaibi George and Councilors,

My name is Marvin Venay, and I am the Director of Advocacy of Tech Goes Home (TGH), a leading nonprofit in Greater Boston devoted to addressing digital inequity. I am testifying this morning in favor of this Order to fund the PEG Access Fund. This fund provides critical support for connecting individuals and families with digital devices, internet connectivity, and the skills training they need to overcome barriers, access essential services online, and capitalize on opportunities presented by the digital world.

First of all, I want to thank the City Council for their attention to digital inequity over the past year. Digital inequity impacts individuals and families across Boston - especially those already facing disproportionate barriers resulting from poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, systemic racism, and more. COVID-19 has only worsened persistent disparities in digital access and reinforced how important it is that we work collectively to ensure equitable, sustainable access for everyone in Boston.

Digital devices and internet connectivity, plus the ability to use them effectively, are essential to participating in school, finding and maintaining employment, accessing telehealth, connecting with loved ones, and more. In response to the pandemic, TGH adapted its work to expand access to our programming while keeping staff, trainers, and learners safe; in addition to continuing to provide each learner with a digital device and internet access. We launched a Distance Learning program that mirrors our in-person courses, created a COVID-19 resource page on our website, and developed a live webinar series for TGH learners and the general public.

This work would not be possible without steadfast support from the City of Boston and the funding that comes through the PEG Access Fund. Working with more than 180 community partners, we prioritize low-income and underserved populations aged 3 to 94, including people without technology at home, who are un- or under-employed, have limited English proficiency, are living with disabilities, and are experiencing housing instability. Of the population TGH serves, 77% of TGH households have incomes under \$35,000, 90% are people of color, nearly 50% are from immigrant families, and 34% of adult learners are unemployed.

In the past five years alone, TGH's programming has served over 21,000 learners and distributed nearly 14,000 new computers. This year, our goal is to serve 5,500 learners through our programs.

Though we have worked tirelessly to build our philanthropic support to marry the City's essential commitment, we need significantly increased support from both the public and private sectors if we are going to end this inequity effectively.

With the support of the Council and approval of funding in the PEG Access Fund, we are eager to continue this partnership and better the lives of our Boston neighbors. To learn more about our work, please visit techgoeshome.org or reach out to me any time at marvin@techgoeshome.org.

Thank you for all you do for the residents of our city.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marvin Venay', written in a cursive style.

Marvin Venay
Director of Advocacy, Tech Goes Home