



**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

ALisa Casas, Communications Director  
SMCG TV 95 Station Manager  
Media Inquiries: 301-475-4200 ext. 71342 or [pio@stmarysmd.com](mailto:pio@stmarysmd.com)

**COMMISSIONERS OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY**

James R. Guy, President  
Eric Colvin, Commissioner  
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner  
Todd B. Morgan, Commissioner  
John E. O'Connor, Commissioner

**NEWS RELEASE** *for Immediate Release*

**No. 2020 – 159**

**August 19, 2020, 4:30 p.m.**

**Commissioners of St. Mary's County Partner with Board of Education to  
Increase Broadband Opportunities for Students**

**LEONARDTOWN, MD** - On August 6, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan announced an additional \$10 million in grant funding to support expanded broadband access for education through the Broadband for Unserved Students Grant. St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) and the St. Mary's County Government Information Technology Departments had a week and a half to prepare a grant application for submission to the State of Maryland.

On August 12, 2020, it was announced that St. Mary's County will receive \$1,685,521, the second-highest amount awarded in the state.

The Commissioners approved the requested FY2021 budget increase for Broadband, the budget amendment and category transfer for the Elementary & Secondary School Relief and Governors Emergency Educations Relief Technology Grants (ESSER) and the county's IT Broadband Plan of Action at their regular meeting on Tuesday, August 18, with Superintendent of Schools James Scott Smith. These funds will continue the large-scale effort to bring broadband internet connections to underserved populations in St. Mary's County. The funds will supplement approximately \$3 million already invested through Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding used to improve existing internet and cable infrastructure in St. Mary's County.

According to Superintendent Smith, work done with the additional broadband funding will provide "the final connection for the majority of homes in St. Mary's County where kids reside."

In a previous meeting, the Commissioners authorized \$400,000 to purchase laptops for students. Smith said, on Tuesday, they were no longer requesting laptops from the Commissioners since the laptops and iPad have now been purchased through the reallocation of several grants received by the Board of Education.

SMCPS and St. Mary's County Government staff identified 580 households currently underserved in the grant application. Following cable installation scheduled to start in September, funded through the Broadband for Unserved Students Grant, homes more than 1000 feet from the existing cable plant will remain unserved. SMCPS will order mobile hotspots, also funded by grant funds, to fill internet service gaps.

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Following the meeting, Commissioner President Randy Guy remarked that being awarded this grant “represented the hard work and dedicated focus of the county, working with the Board, to provide students with every opportunity to have a successful school year - even during the pandemic.”

The county has established a webpage for residents to find information on available local broadband access <https://www.stmarysmd.com/broadband>.

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