TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARC ELRICH ON EXPEDITED BILL 8-21 RENAMING THE DEPARTMENT OF TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

MARCH 16, 2021

Good afternoon, Council President and Councilmembers, my name is Gail Roper, Director of the Department of Technology Services. I am here on behalf of the County Executive in support of EB 8-21 – Renaming the Department of Technology Services (DTS).

DTS is requesting a name change to the Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TBS). DTS has historically been an internally focus organization that responded to work requests from County Departments. With your support over the last 11-months the restructuring of DTS has allowed the department to take more of a consultative role with County Departments to enhance and re-engineer outdated business processes before applying technology solutions. In evolving the focus of the organization, the resident becomes part of the new strategy. We understand the role that technology plays in the goal to gain equity in our community services. This shift in our service portfolio requires new measures for both the Staff and the Departmental outcomes. The value proposition must be more significant to the taxpayers, business operations, and those that do business with the County.

We know that we are a Government entity but there are also very valuable business strategies that are being adopted to improve how we work. We are focused on enhancing the value of our assets for public consumption to solve community challenges and access to information.

<u>**Some Examples:**</u>

- We have a strategy to address the decade-long issue of Broadband Accessibility and Affordability.
- The department embraced entrepreneurial thinking to bring public-private partnerships and advanced technology solutions to expand our FiberNet3 infrastructure asset to impact the digital divide. The Main Street Apartments Digital Equity Project was our first entrepreneurial proof-of-concept that includes a public-private partnership and nascent technologies. We will expand that solution to provide robust internet access to an estimated 500 affordable housing units by the end of the coming fiscal year.

- We have collaborated with SpaceX's Starlink, Elon Musk's high-speed satellite broadband service, which is opening their service market to the Agriculture Reserve in the next few months.

- We provided improvements to customer service within the MC311 call center by re-engineering business processes and implementing a chatbot on the MC311 website that provides residents with on demand answers to the most frequently requested County services. As a result of these efforts the abandon (or hang up) rate in the 311 center decreased from 26% in November to 3% in February. The average hold time decreased from approximately 5 minutes in November to 21 seconds in February. This initiative

that is being recognized nationally as a solution for the call center demands of the pandemic and other emergency situations.

- HHS Vaccine Hotline – We engaged Zammo (a Microsoft partner) to implement conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to aid in COVID-19 vaccine pre-registration. The goal was to reduce call volume handled by HHS staff and streamline the pre-registration process for customers and call takers. The virtual agent is now answering inbound calls to the HHS pre-registration line and pre-screening English and Spanish-speaking callers for vaccine eligibility. The most recent data shows that of the approximate 4,500 calls in a week:
    - 31% were resolved by the virtual agent, requiring no interaction from an HHS live agent; 55% were pre-screened by the virtual agent and passed on to an HHS live agent to assist with pre-registration