

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2010

Contact:**Melia Carter**

708-224-1900

media@maadd.org

MAADD Urges Illinois Attorney General, Governor and Lawmakers to Help Underserved Communities by Updating Telecom Laws*House Bill 6425 will help Illinois close the Digital Divide*

CHICAGO, IL – At a press conference today, the Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide (MAADD) called upon the Attorney General, the Governor and Illinois lawmakers to swiftly pass House Bill 6425, the Consumer Choice Act, into law. This legislation will greatly benefit low income and minority communities by bringing thousands of jobs to the state of Illinois and providing state-of-the-art broadband investment to communities that need it most.

“House Bill 6425 is life changing legislation for people living in low income and minority communities,” said Reverend James L. Demus III, founder and co-director of MAADD. “With increased broadband investment, Illinois can create unlimited potential for communities struggling with high unemployment, soaring healthcare costs and a lack of access to quality education. With the latest broadband technology, underserved neighborhoods can promote economic development through the establishment of minority small businesses that hire locally, and our communities can have better access to healthcare, education and jobs.”

The event, held at the Alliance for Community Peace (ACP) headquarters, an after school program in the Cabrini Green community in Chicago, highlighted the challenges that people living in underserved communities face when there is no access to broadband in the home. In many cases, inner city children cannot even access computer technology at the libraries because crossing into rival gang territory could put their lives at risk.

“We have children that come to our program on a daily basis to use the computers because without access they cannot do their homework, find jobs or apply to college,” said Mr. William Lewis, program coordinator for the Alliance for Community Peace. “Unfortunately, there are thousands of students across the state of Illinois who are not fortunate enough to have programs like ACP where they can access computer technology. Without this access, these children are simply left behind. It is critical for Illinois to pass this important law that brings technology to all children.”

House Bill 6425 is also supported by the minority owned business community who sees additional investment in broadband infrastructure as being a boon to economic development in underserved neighborhoods.

Ed Lighthall, the Northern Regional Vice President for the Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce noted, “Minority communities stand to benefit from policies like HB 6425 because of the infrastructure investment it can spark. More investment in broadband infrastructure means more jobs for Illinois.”

Reverend Demus also stressed that low income and minority communities are becoming increasingly more reliant on wireless technology as people are rapidly dropping landline phone service in favor of using wireless only phone service. He cautioned lawmakers to not lose out on the future by focusing efforts to create policies that cater to the outdated technology of the past.

Demus added that requirements for companies to pour massive investment dollars into landline technology will only create wasteful, unused investment and will deprive communities of high-tech broadband investment that can actually make a difference in the lives of people living in underserved neighborhoods.

“Despite the fact that House Bill 6425 already includes consumer protection standards for landline phone service, we understand that there are advocates out there that are resistant to change and do not see the writing on the walls that landline technology will become a dinosaur within the next decade,” said Demus. “To hold up this legislation because of concerns over technology that is rapidly becoming obsolete would be like lawmakers in the early 1900’s holding up the future of the automobile because they were concerned about developing policies that cater to the buggy whip.”

Demus added, “We ask the Illinois Attorney General and the Governor to stand with us to support policies that will create real positive change in our communities. For the sake of our future and the future of our children, it is critical that lawmakers pass House Bill 6425 into law expeditiously.”

The Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide (MAADD) is a 25,000+ member next generation civil rights organization led by ministers devoted to bridging the Digital Divide and promoting economic and individual empowerment in low income and minority communities. For more information about MAADD, please visit www.maadd.org.