

December 7, 2020

The Honorable Lena Gonzalez
State Capitol, Room 2068
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Broadband for All legislation

Dear Senator Gonzalez:

We write to inform you that we support your efforts to modernize and increase the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) with your legislation, SB 4. Californians across the state have suffered during the pandemic due to a lack of access or insufficiently robust access to the Internet that has made remote work and remote education a significant challenge.

Current law has failed to meet this challenge because it discriminates against local community bidders to build broadband infrastructure, favors slow outdated infrastructure with state money, does not cover all rural and low income Californians, and has been under funded. A recent study by EdSource found that California, despite having CASF already, has the tragic record having the largest number of students in the United States that lack sufficient access to broadband.¹

We strongly support SB 4 provisions as it would remedy these shortfalls and create a program that will put a date certain on ending the digital divide with the following changes:

- 1) Stabilize and expand California's Internet infrastructure program (CASF) and allow the state to invest \$100s of million on broadband infrastructure every year until the digital divide is closed.
- 2) Enable local governments to bond finance more than \$1 billion with state support to secure long-term low interest funding to build local infrastructure.
- 3) Build broadband networks that meet the Governor's Executive Order's goals with an emphasis on scalability to ensure future proofing in infrastructure financed by the state to ensure access is built to last for the 21st century.
- 4) Directs support towards low-income neighborhoods that lack broadband access.
- 5) Expand eligibility for state support to all rural Californian communities.

¹ Sydney Johnson, *Disconnected: Internet Stops Once School Ends for Many Rural California Students*, EDSOURCE SPECIAL REPORT (Dec. 6, 2019), available at <https://edsource.org/2019/disconnected-internet-stops-once-school-ends-for-many-rural-california-students/620825>; See also Julia McEvoy, *Closing California's Digital Divide: One Rural Teacher's Fight to Get Her Students Connected*, KQED (Sep. 22, 2020), available at <https://www.kqed.org/news/11838327/closing-californias-digital-divide-one-rural-teachers-fight-to-get-her-students-connected>.

Students, families, workers, first responders, healthcare providers, and businesses need access to high-speed broadband to fully participate in the 21st century. It is a service as essential as water and electricity making it more critical than ever to rethink the status quo and invest in long term solutions that will address the multiple emergencies facing our state. Millions of California families in our cities and rural communities need these investments to secure access to education, healthcare, jobs, and government services. The time to invest is now.

Sincerely,

Access Humboldt
Access Now
ACLU of California
California Center for Rural Policy
California State Association of Counties
Canal Alliance
Central Coast Broadband Consortium
Coalition for COVID Recovery, Support and Prevention
Common Sense
Computer Science Teachers Association
Consumer Action
Consumer Reports
Contextly
Council for a Strong America
County of Marin Board of Supervisors
County of Monterey Board of Supervisors
CUE
Environmental Center of San Diego
Electronic Frontier Foundation
EveryoneOn
Fight for the Future
Founder Academy
Georgetown Friends of the Library
Great School voices
Humboldt County Office of Education
Indivisible Sacramento
Indivisible Ventura

InnovateEDU
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Khan Academy
Louisville Metro Office of Civic Innovation and Technology
MakeKnowledge
Mayor, City of Daly City
Media Alliance
MediaJustice
mohuman
New America's Open Technology Institute
Normal Heights Indivisible
North Peninsula Democratic Club
OCHIN California Telehealth Network
Open Door Community Health Centers
Peninsula Young Democrats
Public Knowledge
Reddit, Inc.
Rooted In Resistance
Rural County Representatives of California
San Diego County Office of Education
TechEquity Collaborative
The Greenlining Institute
Tony Madrigal, Modesto City Councilmember, District 2
Tucows
Western Governors University
Writers Guild of America West