

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this challenge because it discriminates against local community bidders to build broadband infrastructure, favors slow outdated infrastructure with state money, does not cover all rural and low income Californians, and has been under funded.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 KQED found that California, despite having CASF already, has the tragic record of being the state with the largest number of students in the United States that lack sufficient access to broadband.<sup>1</sup>

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 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 4) Directs support towards low-income neighborhoods that lack broadband access.
- 5) Expand eligibility for state support to all rural Californian communities.

Students, families, workers, first responders, healthcare providers, and businesses need access to high-speed broadband to fully participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>.

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