

For Immediate Release

Contact: Brittany-Rae Gregory
brittany-rae@nextcenturycities.org
May 23, 2023



**NEXT CENTURY CITIES' RYAN JOHNSTON TO TESTIFY ON
DIGITAL EQUITY AND THE BEAD PROGRAM
BEFORE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATORS**

Washington, D.C. (May 23, 2023) – On Tuesday, May 23rd, at 9:30 a.m. PDT/12:30 p.m. EDT, the California Assembly Committee on Communications and Conveyance will hold an informational hearing, "Digital Equity and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program."

Senior Policy Counsel, Ryan Johnston, will [testify](#) on behalf of Next Century Cities. His remarks will emphasize the following:

1. The BEAD Program will only be successful with close collaboration between state and local entities.
2. Communities have experience identifying and addressing digital divides. Soliciting local expertise improves the overall effectiveness of State funding programs.
3. Infrastructure deployment and digital equity must be addressed concurrently. Prioritizing one only worsens disparities elsewhere.

Representatives from the California Public Utilities Commission will offer opening remarks followed by stakeholder perspectives from Next Century Cities, the California Alliance for Digital Equity, US Telecom, and CalBroadband.

Johnston offered the following remarks:

"The BEAD program is designed to support affordable, long-term, high-quality infrastructure and the digital inclusion activities necessary to complement deployment programs. As California works to determine the best uses for this monumental funding opportunity, close collaboration with local officials, Tribal leaders, and community-based organizations is imperative to design a state-level BEAD program that directly addresses the root causes of the digital divide."

The floor will be open for public comment after the testimonies. Review Johnston's opening remarks [here](#). Watch the hearing live [here](#) at 9:30 a.m. PDT.

###