For Immediate Release  
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NEXT CENTURY CITIES SUPPORTS 26 GOVERNORS WHO SIGNED  
JOINT LETTER URGING CONGRESS TO CONTINUE FUNDING ACP 

Washington, D.C. (November 21, 2023) – In just over two years since the Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”) first launched as the Emergency Broadband Benefit in 2021, more than 21 million households have enrolled, including upwards of 300,000 Tribal households. Despite widespread success and bipartisan support, ACP funding is expected to expire in early 2024, which would be devastating for residents at a time when the federal interest rate is at a 22 year high and student loan repayments are resuming after a three year pause. As state broadband offices develop their Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (“BEAD”) plans, ACP remains a core component of affordability strategies. 

On November 13, 2023, 26 governors signed a letter urging Congress to ensure that the ACP remains funded. The letter echoes sentiments from local leaders in Next Century Cities’ membership, declaring: “Closing our nation’s digital divide transcends politics. Whether you live in a rural area, a suburb, or a city, every American needs access to high-speed internet. Preserving the ACP will allow us to build upon the progress we’ve made in expanding connectivity rather than falling behind in a mission we cannot afford to lose.”

Andy Stutzman, Next Century Cities’ Executive Director, stated:
“It is encouraging to see so many governors uniting around the refunding of the Affordable Connectivity Program. As state broadband offices finalize their BEAD plans, they are relying on the ACP to be in place to support the financial aspects of their broadband deployment efforts. ACP has also created opportunities for families to work from home, participate in online job training programs, and for youth to stay connected to their homework and post secondary prospects among other things. The loss of the ACP will mean more than just the loss of Internet connectivity, but could have an effect on income and education outcomes around the country.”

Corian Zacher, Next Century Cities’ Senior Policy Counsel for State & Local Initiatives, remarked:
“Affordability is often cited as the number one barrier between residents and the online tools and services vital to fully participating in society and the global economy. The Affordable Connectivity Program offers a novel solution that both reduces household subscription costs and incentivizes broadband deployment. State governors played an important role in encouraging community leaders and cross-sector agencies to promote the program to eligible households. Now, gubernatorial leadership is vital in showcasing bipartisan support for the ACP’s continuation.”

Stacey Baxter, Next Century Cities’ Program Manager, said:
“Since the inception of the ACP, local officials, community anchor institutions, and other state and community based organizations have worked to build trust with individuals and families stuck on the wrong side of the digital divide. Over 20 million Americans have put their faith in the hands of digital navigators as they enrolled in this federally funded program, with the hopes of finally being able to afford high quality home Internet. Without continued funding, however, the ACP will disappear, millions of Americans will fall back into the wrong side of the digital divide and state and local governments, as well as these community-based institutions, will lose credibility and the trusted relationships they built over the past few years. It is imperative that we keep our promises to the millions of families who are relying on the ACP to work, complete schoolwork, submit job applications, attend telehealth visits, and much more.”

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