



May 10, 2023

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Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
AAJC

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The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Chair
Subcommittee on Financial
Services and General Government
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chair
Subcommittee on Financial Services
and General Government
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Chair Van Hollen, Chair Granger, and Chair Womack,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 230 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, and the 165 undersigned civil society organizations, municipal governments, and other interested groups, we write to request robust additional funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

Today, the ACP's current rate of expenditure is roughly \$500 million per month. Based on this and projected growth, funding for the ACP could be exhausted by Q2 of next year, if not sooner.¹ Without adequate and sustained funding, millions of vulnerable Americans currently relying on the program would see their internet bill jump or be disconnected entirely, and Congress' bipartisan \$42 billion investment in broadband deployment will not meet the goal of universal broadband deployment and adoption.

Broadband access at home is universally recognized as a necessity. It is the essential infrastructure of the 21st century, and the signers of this letter are committed to ensuring that all communities, particularly those who are underserved, gain and continue to have access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality advanced communications services. Lack of high-speed internet access among low-income people, communities of color, and other underserved

¹ "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," Universal Service Administrative Company (last accessed Apr. 14, 2023), <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/ACP-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/#total-enrolled>.

communities is of particular concern, and the ACP has proven critical in getting households in these communities online.

The last three years demonstrate that broadband internet service is indispensable for employment, education, health care, commerce, community building, civic engagement, and government services. The high cost of service, however, prevents access for countless households across the United States.²

Thanks to Congress' action, the ACP now helps more than 17 million households in America afford broadband internet, with enrollment continuing to increase steadily.³ These households collectively save more than \$500 million per month on internet expenses,⁴ while the program drives economic growth, higher incomes, and lower unemployment.⁵ The ACP is currently improving telehealth access for more than 3 million low-income seniors and 400,000 veterans, expanding access to education for more than 3 million students, and providing more economic opportunities to more than 1 million federal housing residents.⁶ Broadband strengthens communities by creating immediate and long-lasting economic benefits and provides economic improvements for everyone — from rural areas that then become more attractive to businesses and workers, to cities facing aging and inadequate broadband infrastructure. For example, one study demonstrated the employment effects of subsidized broadband resulted in just over \$2,200 of benefits per household through increased labor force participation.⁷

Failure to extend the ACP with new funding could result in the biggest loss of internet connectivity ever. Without action from Congress this year, millions of households could immediately lose service.⁸ In addition, the loss of ACP would reduce the efficacy of Congress' groundbreaking \$42 billion investment in the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. A recent study concluded that the

² Anna Read, "How Can the United States Address Broadband Affordability," Pew (Apr. 29, 2022), <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2022/04/29/how-can-the-united-states-address-broadband-affordability>; Dr. Hernan Galperin, Annual Survey on Broadband Adoption 2021, California Emerging Technology Fund and University of Southern California (Mar. 2021), https://www.cetfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Annual_Survey_2021_CETF_USC_Final_Summary_Report_CETF_A.pdf; "No Home Left Offline: Bridging the Broadband Affordability Gap," Education SuperHighway (2022), https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/wp-content/uploads/No-Home-Left-Offline-Report_EducationSuperHighway2021.pdf.

³ "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," Universal Service Administrative Company (last accessed Apr. 14, 2023), <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/#total-enrolled>.

⁴ "Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Actions to Lower High-Speed Internet Costs," The White House (Mar. 15, 2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/03/15/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-new-actions-to-lower-high-speed-internet-costs/>.

⁵ Adie Tomer, Lara Fishbane, Angela Siefer, and Bill Callahan, "Digital Prosperity: How Broadband Can Deliver Health and Equity to All Communities," Brookings (Feb 27, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/digital-prosperity-how-broadband-can-deliver-health-and-equity-to-all-communities/>.

⁶ "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," Universal Service Administrative Company (last accessed Apr. 14, 2023), <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/#total-enrolled>.

⁷ George W. Zuo, 2021. "Wired and Hired: Employment Effects of Subsidized Broadband Internet for Low-Income Americans," 13 American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 447 (Aug. 2021).

⁸ Blair Levin, "Washington May Be About to Take a Giant Step Backward in Closing the Digital Divide," Brookings (Mar. 13, 2023), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2023/03/13/washington-may-be-about-to-take-a-giant-step-backward-in-closing-the-digital-divide/>.

ACP reduces the size of the subsidy needed to incentivize broadband deployment in rural areas by 25 percent.⁹ ACP makes BEAD program dollars go farther. Sustained funding is critical as broadband companies and others consider the level of public and private investment needed to fulfill Congress' goal of universal affordable broadband deployment and adoption.

Thank you for the work you have done already to make high-speed internet affordable and accessible across the country and for your attention to the critical concerns we have raised here. If you have any questions about the issues raised in this letter, please feel free to contact Anita Banerji, senior director of the media/tech program, at banerji@civilrights.org, or Jonathan Walter, media/tech policy counsel, at walter@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
#OaklandUndivided
18 Million Rising
Advocates for Basic Legal Equality
AHIMA Foundation
All4Ed
Alliance for Community Media
Alliance for Digital Equity (Western Massachusetts)
Alternate ROOTS
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Civil Liberties Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Library Association
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Asian Health Services
Austin Free-Net
Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
Baltimore County Public Library
Baltimore Digital Equity Coalition
Baystate Health
Benefits Data Trust
Benton Institute for Broadband & Society
Bitwise Impact

⁹ Kelsey Clark, et al., “Closing the Digital Divide Benefits Everyone, Not Just the Disconnected: An Analysis of How Universal Connectivity Benefits Education, Health Care, Government Services, and Employment,” Common Sense Media (2022), <https://www.common Sense Media.org/research/closing-the-digital-divide-benefits-everyone-not-just-the-unconnected>.

Black Women's Roundtable
BoomTown
Byte Back
CanCode Communities
Center for Changing Lives
Center for Rural Strategies
City of Chicago
City of Cleveland
City of Philadelphia
City of San Antonio
City of San Jose
Civic Nation
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition on Human Needs
Color of Change
Common Cause
Common Cause Delaware
Common Cause Georgia
Common Cause MN
Common Cause New Mexico
Common Sense Media
Communications Workers of America
Community Tech Network
Compudopt
Computers 2 Kids
Connect Your Community Institute
Cuyahoga County
Demand Progress
DigitalC
Duluth Public Access Community Television
East Baton Rouge Parish Library
EducationSuperHighway
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
Energy Outreach Colorado
EveryLibrary Institute NFP
EveryoneOn
Fair Count
Florida Nonprofit Alliance
Florida Philanthropic Network
Frederick County Health Care Coalition
Free Press Action
Fully Equipped 4 Life Training Solutions

GWI, Inc
HALOS
Hispanic Federation
Houston Information Technology Services
Human-I-T
IBSA, Inc
Impact Fund
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Japanese American Citizens League
JustLeadership USA
Kansas Office of Broadband Development
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
League of Women Voters of the United States
LifeLong Medical Care
Link Oregon (Oregon Fiber Partnership)
Lit Communities Broadband, Inc.
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Long Beach Gray Panthers
Low Income Utility Advocacy Project
Lummi Indian Business Council
MACS 2030 – Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and 2030 Census
MakeIT Haverhill
MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund)
Marconi Society
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Media Alliance
MediaJustice
Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC)
NAACP
National Action Network
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Counties
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Housing Cooperatives
National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA)
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients
National Consumers League
National Digital Equity Center
National Digital Inclusion Alliance
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)

National Fair Housing Alliance
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Organization for Women
National Skills Coalition
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New America's Open Technology Institute
Next Century Cities
NTEN
Open MIC
Oregon State University Extension Services
Parents as Teachers
Partners Bridging the Digital Divide
PCs for People
Pennsylvania Utility Law Project
PFLAG National
Public Knowledge
Pullman Public Schools
Right Here, Right Now Project
ROC United
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition
SETDA
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Sojourners
Sonoma County Library
Southeast Community Development Corporation
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future
SUNY #EmTech
Tech Goes Home
Technology Learning Collaborative
The ARC of the United States
The Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce
The Children's Agenda
The Children's Partnership
The Education Trust
The Greelining Institute
The Public Utility Law Project of NY
The STEM Alliance
Tricounty Cradle to Career Collaborative
TURN – The Utility Reform Network
UnidosUS
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry

United Steelworkers
Universal LLC
US Ignite
Valley Vision
Virginia Citizens Consumer Council
Virginia Society for Technology in Education
VOICES for Alabama's Children
Volunteers of America National Services
Westchester Library
Women Employed
YISD

CC: The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Bill Hagerty, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General
Government
The Honorable Rose DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General
Government