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January 8, 2024

The Honorable Laphonza Butler
United States Senate
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G-12
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: SUPPORT, Extending the Affordable Connectivity Program

Dear Senator Butler:

On behalf of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to urge you to take action to extend funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).

Enacted as part of the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), the ACP provides low-income households with a discount of up to \$30 per month for internet service and up to \$75 per month on qualifying Tribal lands or high-cost locations, making an internet subscription affordable for all – and in many cases, entirely free. In conjunction with historic State and Federal investments in broadband infrastructure and digital equity, the ACP has resulted in bridging the digital divide by closing the affordability gap in Solano County and in communities across the country.

According to the State of California's Department of Technology, 41 percent of households in Solano County are eligible for participation in the ACP. To date, nearly 20,000 households have enrolled in the program, with over 41,000 additional households eligible for participation. The ACP ensures that low-income residents of our County can gain and continue to have access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality advanced communications services. As has been clearly shown over the course of the last three years, broadband internet service is indispensable for employment, education, health care, commerce, community building, civic engagement, and government services.

Unfortunately, funding for the ACP is projected to be exhausted by April of this year. Without congressional action to extend the program, many residents of Solano County who rely on the ACP, including low-income seniors, veterans, and students, would see their internet bill increase. Moreover, in some cases, households may lose internet access altogether.

Additionally, the loss of the ACP would reduce the efficacy of the IIJA's \$42 billion investment in the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, which is a key component of federal efforts aimed at ensuring that everyone in America – including individuals and families in hard-to-serve rural areas – has access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet. Pursuant to a recent study, the existence of the ACP reduces by 25 percent the per-household subsidy needed to incentivize internet service providers to build in rural areas. Indeed, sustained ACP 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.

In closing, Solano County urges you to ensure that long-term ACP funding is a top priority for inclusion in the final fiscal year 2024 appropriations package or another legislative vehicle. Continued investment

Honorable Laphonza Butler

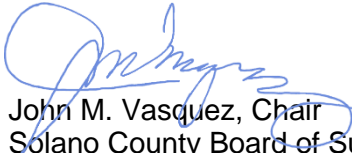
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in this critically important program will ensure that low-income individuals in Solano County, across California, and throughout the nation will have access to essential communications services and that the rollout of federal BEAD program funds will help support efforts aimed at ensuring high-quality, affordable internet for all.

Thank you for your ongoing work on broadband issues and for your attention to this critically important request. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Joe Krahn, Solano County's Federal Policy Advocate, at (202) 898-1444 or JK@ParagonLobbying.com.

Sincerely,



John M. Vasquez, Chair
Solano County Board of Supervisors

CC:

The Honorable Alex Padilla, United States Senator
The Honorable John Garamendi, United States Representative
The Honorable Mike Thompson, United States Representative
The Honorable Bill Dodd, California State Senator
The Honorable Lori D. Wilson, California State Assemblymember
Tim Flanagan, Chief Information Officer, Solano County, CA
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