

From: Nick Romley
To: CA Broadband Council
Subject: Public Comments - California IT in Education
Date: Friday, November 20, 2020 9:45:20 AM
Attachments: 11.20.20 - CITE - CBC Comments.pdf

Good morning,

Attached please find comments relating to California's Broadband Action Plan from California IT in Education (CITE).

Thank you,
Nick

Nick Romley | Legislative Analyst
Capitol Advisors Group

November 19, 2020

Amy Tong, Chairperson
California Broadband Council
1325 J Street, Suite 1600
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairperson Tong,

I write on behalf of **California IT in Education (CITE)**, to provide feedback on the current draft of California's Broadband Action Plan, as provided for in Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-73-20. CITE is a not-for-profit, professional membership association supporting K-12 IT Professionals working in schools, and as such we are uniquely positioned to provide relevant information to the Council as they finalize the Action Plan in December.

Our comments seek to address *Goal 2: All Californians can Afford Broadband and the Devices necessary to Access the Internet*, found under the Twelve-Month Action Plan section of the draft. We appreciate the Council's intent to ensure all Californians not only have access to adequate, reliable broadband internet, but that the options available to them are affordable. As currently drafted though, the stated goal leaves room for interpretation as to what "affordable" means.

Our members have worked diligently to ensure California's students can receive high-quality instruction via digital learning at home. However, it has become clear that the "affordable" plans offered to low-income families by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) tend to fall short of meeting student needs. For instance, these plans often include data caps which, once met, sharply throttle-down bandwidth to the home. This has become increasingly problematic as, during distance learning, the data being used is not only from applications we all hear about like Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, or Zoom, but other curricular sites that school districts use. Students must upload assignments and download resources, both of which draw against the data cap. School districts do utilize different programs, but as we continue to mature distance learning offerings, more data will be required and these caps will continue to harm students.

Additionally, some initial discount plan offerings during COVID-19 have converted to higher-cost plans, which place an additional burden on low socioeconomic households. Switching to available Lifeline options offered by ISPs requires documentation that some are reluctant or even afraid to provide.

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To remedy this issue, the state should take a leadership role in defining what a truly affordable broadband plan actually looks like. For example, setting minimum standards before a plan can be labeled “affordable” is a small step the state could take to ensure students and families are receiving the bandwidth they need to engage in digital learning. **We strongly encourage the Council to consider including, as part of Goal 2, a state-level role in ensuring affordable broadband plans offered by ISPs are not only economically accessible, but meet minimum standards that adequately address the needs of California’s students.**

Thank you for all the time and effort being put into the Broadband Action Plan, and for your consideration. If you need more information about our comments, please contact me at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Andrea Bennett
Executive Director – CITE

cc: Members, California Broadband Council

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