

From: Justin Ewers
To: [CA Broadband Council](#)
Cc: Ray Pearl
Subject: California Housing Consortium letter - State Broadband Action Plan
Date: Friday, November 20, 2020 2:36:36 PM
Attachments: Letter - CA Broadband Council - 11-20-20.pdf

Hello -

Please see attached for a letter from the California Housing Consortium submitted as public comment to the California Broadband Council to inform the development of a California State Broadband Action Plan.

Thank you for your consideration and please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,
Justin

Justin Ewers
[EWERS PUBLIC AFFAIRS](#)





November 20, 2020

Amy Tong
Director and State Chief Information Officer
California Department of Technology
1325 J Street, Suite 1600
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: California State Broadband Action Plan

Director Tong and Members of the California Broadband Council:

The California Housing Consortium (CHC) has been closely following the deliberations of the California Broadband Council as it begins to develop a new California State Broadband Action Plan to help bridge the digital divide during and after COVID-19.

Broadband access has become an increasingly urgent issue for the more than one million Californians who live in the state's affordable housing communities, whether they are seniors who are increasingly isolated during the pandemic, working parents trying to communicate via Zoom meetings with their colleagues, or one of many lower-income children struggling to participate in distance learning.

As California's leading non-partisan advocate for the production and preservation of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households, CHC is committed to helping everyone living in this state find a safe, affordable place to call home. But for far too many of our residents, especially during COVID-19, we have come to recognize that access to high-speed internet is equally essential.

Many of the state's affordable housing properties do not have access to high-speed broadband, especially in rural areas and underserved urban communities that lack the necessary infrastructure. And CHC members have seen the results of this growing digital divide firsthand: In the first few weeks of the state's stay-at-home orders in March, more than 15,000 high school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District were absent online, and another 40,000 students lost the ability to maintain regular contact with their teachers as a result of internet issues.

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Two young Salinas residents gained national attention this fall when they were discovered sitting outside a Taco Bell in order to access the internet and attend school. Less widely noticed, in the same community, one of our CHC members, Eden Housing, had to arrange for a WiFi truck to provide adequate internet service to its affordable housing residents.

Not everyone is fortunate enough to have a landlord who will go the extra mile to help them solve a problem. And as much as our members are trying to fill these gaps, we hear stories every day from families trying to help their kids do homework on mobile phones, job applicants missing interviews because of spotty internet, and older Californians struggling to connect with their friends and family.

The simple fact of the matter is this: Slow internet connections and the high cost of broadband are proving to be a major obstacle to fully participating in the California economy.

That is why CHC and our members believe it is critical for the state's new broadband action plan to include strategies for improving broadband access for residents of the state's affordable housing communities. We are eager to support the California Broadband Council, the Governor, and the Legislature in developing proposals that will provide more robust, high-speed internet service for new and existing affordable housing, reduce broadband costs for lower-income residents struggling to pay the rent, and strengthen legal definitions of what qualifies as an "underserved" household or community.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We will be closely following the development of the Council's draft action plan, and will be pleased to engage further as the plan is finalized.

If you have any questions, please contact Justin Ewers of Ewers Public Affairs at [REDACTED]



Ray Pearl
Executive Director

CC: Members, California Broadband Council