



YOLO HEALTHY AGING ALLIANCE

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4/13/21

Support for AB 14, by Aguiar-Curry - *Communications: broadband services: California Advanced Services Fund.*

Dear Assemblymembers:

Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enhance the wellbeing of older adults in Yolo County through education, collaboration, and advocacy. We work to identify and address gaps in services and connect people to the many resources and services throughout the County. One of our priority issues is advocacy for increased services, including broadband services, for our rural and under-served communities to ensure access for all residents in our County.

We write today in support for AB 14, *The Internet for All Act of 2021*, authored by Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry.

As we learned all too well during our various natural disasters and COVID pandemic in Yolo County, access to broadband services is uneven and, in some cases, non-existent in parts of our county. Urgent, timely and accurate notifications during disasters are crucial to the health and safety of all of our residents, especially our seniors and disabled residents, who have additional requirements to be successfully evacuated, get vaccinated or contact family. In addition, all residents of our county should have access to the information and entertainment that the internet now provides to some residents.

The use of telehealth during this pandemic has proven that it can be a vital alternative to in-person doctor visits, saving patients time, energy, transportation money, and potential virus exposure. While telehealth should continue to be a medical option after the pandemic is over, its usefulness is currently limited to patients who have digital access and, as noted, many in Yolo County do not have access.

The Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance supports AB 14, *Communications: broadband services: California Advanced Services Fund (The Internet for All Act of 2021)* for the following reasons. It is inclusive, comprehensive, ongoing, and equitable.

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The goal specified in the Internet for All Now Act is to provide broadband access to no less than 98 percent of California households in each California Advanced Services Fund consortia region. It is intended to close the digital divide by connecting students, families, and communities with reliable internet connectivity that will remain a necessity after the COVID-19 pandemic has abated.

AB 14

- equips internet service providers, local governments and tribal governments with the opportunity to expedite the connection of their communities to reliable broadband access indefinitely. It prioritizes development of broadband infrastructure in the most vulnerable and unserved rural and urban communities by extending the ongoing collection of funds deposited into the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) to provide grants necessary to bridge the digital divide.
- creates a Broadband Bond Financing and Securitization Account to support costs related to financing broadband infrastructure by local government agencies or nonprofit organizations.
- Ensures 'anchor' institutions as schools, community colleges, libraries, hospitals, health clinics, public safety entities, government buildings, and community organizations are eligible for CASF grants on a fair cost-sharing basis for interconnection along the path of deployment.
- Recognizes that deployment of broadband infrastructure is vital to harvest life-saving technologies and sustain economic transactions in times of emergencies.
- Creates a fiber optic network infrastructure that will be deployed to assist unserved households, community anchor institutions, small businesses, and employers in order to close the digital divide.

Thank you for your consideration of our letter. We urge SUPPORT for AB 14.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheila A. Allen".

Sheila A. Allen, RN, PhD
Executive Director

cc: Assemblymember McCarty, Senators Dodd and Pan