



County of Monterey

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March 11, 2024

Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Room 7530
Sacramento CA 95814

Re: SB 1179 (Durazo) Affordable Internet and Net Equality Act of 2024. – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Durazo:

The County of Monterey is pleased to support your measure Senate Bill (SB) 1179, Affordable Internet and Net Equality Act of 2024. This measure requires the California Department of Technology (CDT) to only enter into a procurement contract with a qualified internet service provider (ISP) that offers affordable internet service for eligible households and will require the CDT to establish and meet state internet coverage expansion goals for all eligible households.

Addressing the digital divide has been a focal point of federal and state policy and resource allocation. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, billions of dollars in federal and state funding were allocated to broadband infrastructure deployment. The California Broadband for All statewide action plan was established. The Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA) established the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a federal low-income internet subsidy for households whose income is at or below 200% the federal poverty level and are participating in a public assistance program.

As of February 8, 2024, 2,945,251 households (HHs), were enrolled in ACP (approximately 50%) which means that almost 2.9 million HHs still need an affordable Internet subscription to get connected to the Internet. Further, the 2.9 million HHs enrolled in ACP need an affordable Internet option. A major challenge to increasing enrollment is the lack of awareness, with a 2023 Statewide Digital Equity Survey finding 65% of eligible HHs were not even aware of available programs.

SB 1179 is intended to fix the issues outlined above. This bill will direct CDT to only enter into a procurement contract with an internet service provider offering affordable home internet service costing no more than \$30 per month and meets specified minimum speed requirements to low-income eligible households. It will set target goals for covering at least 90% of eligible households enrolled in affordable internet by 2026, and at least 95% by 2029. Lastly, this measure will require ISPs to advertise their affordable internet offers through community and ethnic media in multiple languages, both in print and online to ensure awareness of affordable options.

SB 1179 will align the interests of public and private stakeholders to ensure an affordable Internet service is available for low-income California households. For these reasons, the County of Monterey is pleased to support SB 1179. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the County of Monterey's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,



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DRAFT

Glenn Church, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: Senate Energy Utilities and Communications Committee, Consultants
The Honorable Anna Caballero, 14th Senate District
The Honorable John Laird, 17th Senate District
The Honorable Robert Rivas, 29th Assembly District
The Honorable Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)