



Re: Support Item 5, file number 20-0761-S1, a motion regarding digital discrimination and ensuring equitable broadband access in the City

Dear Civil Rights, Equity, Immigration, Aging, and Disability Committee Chair Soto-Martinez and Members Hutt, Hernandez, Padilla, and Rodriguez:

On behalf of the 70-member-strong Digital Equity LA (DELA) coalition and allied organizations, we urge your support for Item 5 on the agenda of the January 19, 2024, committee meeting, a motion to advance digital equity in the City of Los Angeles, presented by Councilmembers Harris-Dawson, Blumenfeld, Padilla, and Hernandez and co-presented by Councilmembers Krekorian and Raman.

Broadband internet service is essential for accessing education and healthcare, and for participating in the economy and civic life. Until the neighborhood in which you live or work no longer determines the quality, price, and terms of internet service available to you, the differences in our levels of connectivity will continue to exacerbate systemic inequities in our City.

Last November the Federal Communications Commission defined digital discrimination in federal law and established mechanisms to investigate and remedy it, laying the foundation for the City of LA to be the first local government in the country to also take this critical step. Per the FCC, digital discrimination of access is “Policies or practices, not justified by genuine issues of technical or economic feasibility, that (1) differentially impact consumers’ access to broadband internet access service based on their income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion or national origin, or (2) are intended to have such differential impact.”

As correctly stated in the motion, people who live in low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately disconnected in urban, suburban, and rural areas alike. Numerous studies have documented that the same communities the have been subject to under-investment or disinvestment for decades continue to be effectively redlined with respect to broadband infrastructure.

Moreover, multiple studies of broadband access in Los Angeles have demonstrated the devastating impact of industry pricing practices that effectively make internet access more expensive for those struggling to afford it. California Community Foundation and DELA, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and independent journalism outlet The Markup, among others, in aggregate studied tens of thousands of addresses in the city and published overwhelming evidence that providers systematically offer worse service - slower, less reliable, delivered over older technology - to low-income communities and communities of color at the same or higher price than they offered fast, reliable service to higher income and whiter communities.

To close the digital divide and ensure equitable access to the fast, reliable, and affordable internet necessary to access education and health care and to fully participate in the City's economic opportunities and civic life, we must address the disparate outcomes of provider decisions (regardless of whether providers intended those outcomes.) **Tackling digital discrimination is not the only action needed to ensure digital equity, but it is a necessary action.**

Thank you for your consideration. We are grateful and proud to stand with you in this vital work.

Sincerely,

Digital Equity LA

- Alliance for Better Community (ABC)
- Arts for LA
- Artworx
- Boys and Girls Clubs of the Los Angeles Harbor
- California Community Foundation
- California Native Vote Project
- Children Youth and Family Collaborative (CYFC)
- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
- Communities in Schools of Los Angeles (CISLA)
- CARECEN
- Destination Crenshaw
- Diversity in Leadership
- Educators for Excellence
- EveryoneOn
- Families In Schools
- GPSN
- Healing and Justice Center
- Inner City Struggle
- Innovate Public Schools
- Institute for Local Self-Reliance
- LA Coalition for Excellent Public Schools
- Latino Equity Alliance
- Los Angeles Urban League
- NextGen California
- One Institute
- Our Voice
- Para Los Niños
- Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)
- Partnership for LA Schools
- Promesa Boyle Heights
- Shoes 4 Grades
- SoCal CAN
- The Children's Partnership
- The Education Trust - West
- The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
- UNITE-LA
- United Parents and Students
- United Way of Greater Los Angeles
- YMCA of Metro Los Angeles