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Fifth District**BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS**County Administration
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www.countyofsb.org**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

May 27, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 9581**Re: Governor's Broadband Proposal – SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Skinner and Assemblymember Ting:

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to urge the immediate passage of the Governor's proposal to invest \$7 billion to make a serious, concentrated effort to close the Digital Divide.

The flexible funding for broadband included in the American Rescue Plan Act and a recent report finding that 100 Mbps fiber can be built to all unserved homes and businesses for less than \$10 billion dollars have created a once-in-a-generation opportunity to connect the unconnected and improve affordability and speeds for all Californians.

The Governor's plan would address all of the most serious issues that cause the Digital Divide. It would invest in short-term affordability supports for those with access but without the means to connect. It would commit \$3 billion to last-mile construction efforts in a way specifically designed to leverage further funding from local agencies and service providers.

Perhaps most importantly, the plan would invest in a transformative public infrastructure project to build a statewide open access middle mile network, which would reduce the costs for all last-mile projects, giving the state a bigger bang for its buck. But beyond that significant benefit, a statewide open access middle mile network is also the only long-term solution to the issues of universal service and affordability. It would make it more cost-effective and therefore more likely for new service providers to build into communities—representing about half of all connections statewide—suffering under a local broadband monopoly.

Using the state's financial resources to expand broadband is a public good that is both moral and practical, but also urgent. The best time to close the Digital Divide was 20 years ago, but the second best time is now, not next year or two years from now. Committing \$7 billion to this effort would be the state's most serious effort yet to try to close the Digital Divide.

The Board of Supervisors adopted a 2021 Legislative Platform which includes the Economic Enhancement/ Revenue Diversification plank under the job growth and economic vitality principle. In the plank it discusses support of technology infrastructure improvements, including broadband services and supports opportunities to increase economic vitality. The County has also adopted the inter-agency collaboration principle that states that the County will support the advocacy efforts of organizations such as the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) and will collaborate on mutually beneficial issues.

For these reasons, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors urges to the immediate passage of the Governor's proposal to invest \$7 billion into broadband. If you have questions about the Board's position, please contact the County's Legislative Coordinator, Jasmine McGinty at 805-568-3108 or jmcginty@countyofsb.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cliff Berg
Governmental Advocates, Inc.

cc: The Honorable Senator Monique Limon, 19th Senate District
The Honorable Assemblymember Steve Bennett, 37th Assembly District
The Honorable Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham, 35th Assembly District
Members, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors
Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Nancy Anderson, Assistant County Executive Officer, County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors