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KATHLEEN KRAUSE
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor
Bakersfield, CA 93301
Telephone (661) 868-3585
TTY Relay (800) 735-2929

July 30, 2024

The Honorable Laphonza Butler
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building
500 Constitution Ave NE, Room 112
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Cosponsor Request – S. 4317 Secure and Affordable Broadband Extension Act

Dear Senator Butler,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for S. 4317 and respectfully request that you cosponsor this important legislation titled the *Secure and Affordable Broadband Extension Act*.

This bipartisan bill, introduced by Senator Ben Lujan (D-NM), would provide additional funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which was created as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and provides low-income households a discount of up to \$30 per month for internet service and up to \$75 per month on qualifying Tribal lands or high-cost locations, making internet service affordable for all – and in many cases, entirely free.

Kern County has served on the front lines of our community's effort to close the digital divide – forging partnerships and supporting community engagement efforts to drive deployment and adoption of high-speed internet in unserved and underserved communities. The ACP is a vital tool in achieving these efforts.

Over 2.8 million households in California have relied on ACP subsidies and discounts to afford critical broadband internet service. On June 1st, those enrolled households stopped receiving benefits from this program as the initial federal funding appropriated to the ACP ran out. Kern is urging Congress to pass this vital legislation as it would provide an additional \$6 billion for the ACP to restart and continue benefits.

Proponents of the ACP argue that the subsidy essentially pays for itself. A recent economics working paper¹ estimated that for every dollar spent on the ACP, the nation's gross domestic product increases by \$3.89. Another study² calculated that ACP subscribers will likely lose \$10 billion in work opportunities, \$1.4 billion in telehealth savings, and \$627 million in student benefits if the program doesn't return. Yet another study

¹ <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/2311/2311.02431.pdf>

² https://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Analysis_-Economic-Impact-of-ACP-Expiration-050124.pdf

posted by the Benton Institute³ found that the lost economic benefits from e-commerce/online shopping for low-income households that used the ACP amounts to roughly \$1.5 billion annually.

The end of the ACP could also jeopardize the \$42 billion Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program. One analysis found that the existence of the ACP led to an estimated 25% reduction in the per-household subsidy needed to incentivize providers in rural areas.

For all the reasons above, the Kern County Board of Supervisors urges you to cosponsor this important legislation and we look forward to working with you to ensure its passage in the Senate.

Sincerely,



David Couch, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
National Association of Counties
California State Association of Counties
Carpi & Clay

³ <https://www.benton.org/publications/acp-expiration-means-billions-lost-savings>