



Dear CPUC Commissioner, Darcie Houck or Alice Reynolds President of the Commission

Subject: Concerns Regarding Federal Funding Account (FFA) Grant Awards for California Counties

We are writing to address the current status and concerns regarding the Federal Funding Account (FFA) grant awards, particularly for eight rural counties in the San Joaquin Valley region within California. \$804 million of the available FFA grant has been awarded or recommended for projects in 33 counties across California. This raises concerns about the distribution of FFA funds and how these awards and recommended awards are being determined within the San Joaquin Valley Region, as only \$53.5 million of the total \$804 million (6.65%) has been allocated to just two counties out of the eight in this critical agricultural region. ***The signatory counties individually and collectively question the validity of the CPUC's process given how few awards are scheduled for a part of California that clearly is meant to be prioritized.***

The allocation of awards to only one of the rural counties highlights the need for increased transparency and understanding of the process by which these grants are awarded. Rural counties, which face significant challenges in accessing affordable and reliable broadband, are disproportionately affected by this uneven distribution of funds.

It is also important to emphasize the critical nature of affordable service offerings in the FFA's scoring and ranking methodology. Many of these rural counties have higher-than-average low-income populations relative to the state of California and rank far below average in terms of access to affordable broadband services, further exacerbating the digital divide. Additionally, we have observed that several FFA-approved awards lack clarity on what and how affordable tiered pricing structures will be offered, despite these being a required component of the FFA guidelines regarding affordable service offerings. This discrepancy undermines the objective of promoting equitable and affordable access to broadband in rural communities.

We respectfully request clarification on the process used to determine how FFA grant awards are made. The lack of clarity surrounding this process has led to uncertainty among all eight counties about how future awards will be handled. As rural counties continue to seek ways to improve their broadband infrastructure, it is vital that we have a clear understanding of how to navigate the available current and future broadband grant opportunities effectively.

Finally, we would like to underscore the importance of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Association of California Counties (SJVRACC) in future funding decisions. These counties are not only integral to California's agricultural output, contributing more than \$24 billion, and dairy and beef producing \$6.4 billion, but also play a critical role in providing food for the world. Access to reliable and affordable broadband is essential to all operations and economic growth.

Again, our understanding that a region as underserved as ours would be prioritized for funding, certainly more so than is currently the CPUC's plan. We urge the CPUC to ensure that future FFA awards support rural counties and promote the goals of affordable broadband access and equity. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with Commissioner Houck to discuss the current funding and affordable offerings and look forward to your response and further discussions on how we can work together to achieve these goals.

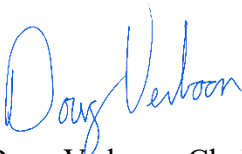
Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



Nathan Magsig, Chairman
County of Fresno



David Couch, Chairman
County of Kern



Doug Verboon, Chairman
County of Kings



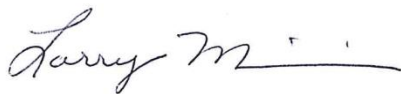
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