

January 4, 2024

Re: Co-Sponsor the *Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024*

Dear Members of the House of Representatives,

The undersigned organizations, which represent a diverse coalition of our nation's population and interests, write to strongly urge you to continue the work you have done to make high-speed home broadband internet service affordable and accessible across the country by co-sponsoring the bipartisan *Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024*, which provides \$7 billion in funding to continue the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). To date, the ACP has successfully allowed over 22 million households¹ in equal numbers of Republican and Democratic districts to experience the transformative power of high-speed home broadband service in the lives of families and children by expanding access to education, job opportunities, telehealth, e-commerce, entrepreneurship, civic participation, communication with loved ones and more. Although \$7 billion will only fund the ACP through, at longest, the end of 2024, it is a critical step toward continuing the significant bipartisan success of this program to provide connectivity nationwide.²

Based on projected growth, funding for the ACP could be depleted within the next three to four months, if not sooner.³ Without additional funding for the ACP, millions of families who rely on the program would see their home internet bill increase beyond their means to afford it, which could result in having their service disconnected. The nation cannot afford the risk of losing the success of the ACP's ability to help close the opportunity gap for the millions of families who have come to rely on high-speed home internet access for education, telehealth, employment, and more.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that access to high-speed home broadband internet service is not a luxury, it is a necessity.⁴ Congress recognized in its original funding for the ACP

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¹ ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," Universal Service Administrative Company (last accessed November 9, 2023) <https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/#total-enrolled>

² Drew Garner, "What Congress Needs to Know About ACP Funding" Common Sense (November 14, 2023), <https://www.common sense media.org/kids-action/articles/what-congress-needs-to-know-about-acp-funding>

³ Paul Garnett, "Affordable Connectivity Program needs permanent funding", The Hill (June 24, 2022)

⁴ Emily A. Vogels, Andrew Perrin, Lee Rainie and Monica Anderson, "53% of Americans Say the Internet Has Been Essential During the COVID-19 Outbreak", Pew Research Center (April 30, 2020)

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/04/30/53-of-americans-say-the-internet-has-been-essential-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

that access to affordable high-speed home broadband service is a necessity in the 21st century, particularly for low-income people, communities of color, and other marginalized and underserved communities. High-speed home broadband service provides people with the ability to participate and compete in the digital economy, access employment, online education, remote work, entrepreneurship opportunities, participate in civil engagement, and utilize telehealth services. Affordable high-speed home broadband internet service also advances economic empowerment and narrows the digital skills gap that currently impacts our nation's marginalized populations.⁵

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided the original funding for the ACP.⁶ This bipartisan legislation also provided a historic investment of \$42.45 billion in the Broadband Equity and Deployment⁷ (BEAD) program to expand access to high-speed home internet by funding infrastructure deployment throughout the nation. The BEAD and ACP programs work in tandem to achieve Congress' goal of universal broadband deployment and adoption throughout our nation. Failure to provide continued funding for the ACP would reduce the efficacy of Congress' investment in the BEAD broadband deployment program and thwart its goal of universal broadband deployment and adoption for our nation.

Thank you for the work you have done to make high-speed home broadband service affordable to households across the country. We look forward to your leadership in support of the *Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024* to maintain the progress that the ACP has made to close the nation's digital gap and secure a digitally connected future for all.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIA Vote)
Association of Assistive Technology Act Program
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)

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⁵ "No Home Left Offline: Bridging the Broadband Affordability Gap," Education Super Highway (2022), https://www.educationsuperhighway.org/wp-content/uploads/No-Home-Left-Offline-Report_EducationSuperHighway2021.pdf

⁶ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, 47 U.S.C. § 1752 (2021) <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-117publ58/pdf/PLAW-117publ58.pdf>

⁷ National Telecommunications and Information Administration, Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program, <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/broadband-equity-access-and-deployment-bead-program>

Benton Institute for Broadband & Society
Black Women's Roundtable
Civic Nation
Common Cause
Common Sense Media
CommunicationFIRST
Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO
Consumer Federation of America
Free Press Action
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
Low Income Utility Advocacy Project
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
MediaJustice
Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council
National Action Network
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Community Action Foundation
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients
National Council of Negro Women
National Digital Inclusion Alliance
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Urban League
New America's Open Technology Institute
NTEN
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future
The Arc of the US
The Greenlining Institute
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry
United Spinal Association