

SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY BROADBAND ACT

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your Members of Congress to support the Community Broadband Act, introduced as H.R. 2552 by Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) and S. 1197 by Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) in the 118th Congress, which is a bill that prohibits states from blocking the provision of broadband by public providers, public-private partnership providers, or cooperatively organized providers. The bill would require that public providers and state or local entities participating in a partnership administer applicable ordinances and rules without discrimination against competing private providers.

BACKGROUND:

The county role in the deployment of broadband infrastructure and services is extensive, and it includes central roles as public providers and/or public-private partners in broadband service projects. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the direct role and contributions that county governments must play to ensure all of our unconnected and underserved residents receive high-speed internet services. Despite this highlighted need, there are currently barriers in 18 states that restrict the ability of local governments to become directly involved in the deployment of broadband services or the partnering on broadband services provisioning with private partners.

The Community Broadband Act, previously introduced in the 117th Congress, would override state-level prohibitions by allowing counties and other public providers in any state to provide broadband services without discrimination. The bill would also ensure that public providers do not use their dual roles as policymaker and regulator to enact prohibitions or discrimination against existing or emerging private providers of broadband services.

COUNTIES PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE AS POLICYMAKERS, FUNDERS, DATA AGGREGATORS, CONVENERS AND PARTNERS IN PURSUING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO BROADBAND ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY AND RELIABILITY.

COUNTIES WOULD VASTLY BENEFIT FROM FEDERAL ASSISTANCE THAT REDUCES BARRIERS IN PLAYING THIS ROLE. THIS INCLUDES PARTNERING WITH LOCAL PROVIDERS AND ACTING AS PUBLIC PROVIDERS, WHERE NEEDED, TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

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THE BRIEF



KEY TALKING POINTS:

- The Community Broadband Act would ensure that every American has the opportunity to receive high-speed internet services through the empowerment of the public provisioning of broadband services in areas where a private market does not exist or is exceedingly high-cost and low-return for private providers.
- The Community Broadband Act would promote competition, incentivize modern services to underserved communities and prohibit state preemption of municipal investments and partnerships, including with the private sector, to enable community broadband networks to operate.

For further information, contact Seamus Dowdall at 202.942.4212 or sdowdall@naco.org.

