

**REPORT OF THE
CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST**

DATE: May 31, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso  Council File No: 19-0002-S76
Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No: 19-05-0438

SUBJECT: Resolution to support S. 1167

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the Resolution (Blumenfield – Harris-Dawson) to include in the City’s 2019 – 2020 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for S. 1167 (Murray), the Digital Equity Act, which would create new federal grant programs to help promote digital equity and support digital inclusion programs.

SUMMARY

The Resolution (Blumenfield – Harris-Dawson), introduced on April 30, 2019, states that access to high-speed internet service is essential for access to education, job opportunities, health resources, and civic engagement. Access to broadband service differs greatly within Los Angeles according to geography, income, race, and age. Closing this digital divide requires additional resources than currently available to the City.

The Resolution further states that S. 1167 (Murray), the Digital Equity Act, would create a \$125 million grant program for states to create individualized digital equity plans and provide another \$125 million for projects by local governments, non-profit organizations, and other groups. S. 1167 would provide additional revenue to allow the City to create digital inclusion programs. The Resolution therefore requests that the City support S. 1167.

BACKGROUND

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) defines digital equity as the “condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy.” As connectivity emerges as a requirement to access employment, learning opportunities, and essential services, programs that offer opportunities for individuals and communities to access the internet may become increasingly important.

In 2017, the Annenberg Research Network on International Communication (ARNIC) mapped access to home broadband service in Los Angeles County. The study found significant differences in the rates of broadband adoption across the region. Adoption levels above 89% are common in West Los Angeles and parts of the San Fernando Valley. In East and South Los Angeles approximately half of residents have broadband service at home. A third of low-income households, however, do not have home broadband, compared to 17.6% of the general population. Low-income households are also more likely to rely exclusively on mobile service.

S. 1167, also known as the Digital Equity Act, establishes two separate grant programs to be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), a federal agency located within the Department of Commerce. The first grant program would provide \$125 million annually for states to fund the creation and implementation of digital equity plans. State digital equity plans would be required to identify barriers to digital equity faced by covered populations, including individuals who live in low-income households, are veterans, have disabilities, who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and who primarily reside in a rural area, among others), to set measurable objectives for promoting digital equity, and to identify how a state would collaborate with cities, local educational agencies, non-profits, and other groups. Funding would also be provided for implementing states' digital equity plans.

The second grant program would provide \$125 million to be annually awarded on a competitive basis to support digital equity projects undertaken by cities, not-for-profit organizations, and other specified groups. Applicants are to be assessed on whether the projects will increase adoption rates of broadband among populations served by the applicant. The federal government's share of any project awarded funds under this program may not exceed 90%.

Additionally, the Digital Equity Act would direct the NTIA to evaluate digital equity projects and provide policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels with detailed information about which projects are the most effective.

DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED

Information Technology Agency

BILL STATUS

4/11/2019	Introduced in Senate
4/11/2019	Read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.



Tim Plummer
Analyst

SMT:tcp

Attachments: Resolution (Blumenfield – Harris-Dawson) in support of S. 1167

RESOLUTION

RULES, ELECTIONS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state, or federal governmental body must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, access to high-speed internet service is essential for access to education, job opportunities, health resources, and civic engagement, as well as other crucial elements of modern life; and

WHEREAS, a study from the Annenberg Research Network on International Communication (ARNIC) shows that within the City of Los Angeles access to broadband service differs greatly according to geography, income, race, and age, causing vulnerable groups to be excluded from the enormous social and economic dividends associated with high-speed internet access; and

WHEREAS, the City has existing programs to reduce barriers to access to internet service, such as OurCycle LA, which distributes refurbished computers to people in underserved communities, and has made previous attempts to close the digital divide through proposals such as CityLink, which aimed to encourage the deployment of advanced wireline and Wi-Fi digital communications networks; and

WHEREAS, closing the digital divide requires additional resources than currently available to the City; and

WHEREAS, S. 1167 (Murray), the Digital Equity Act, was introduced in the Senate on April 11th, 2019; and

WHEREAS, the proposed legislation would create a \$120 million grant program for states to create individualized digital equity plans and provide another \$120 million for projects by local governments, non-profit organizations, and other groups; and

WHEREAS, the Digital Equity Act would provide additional revenue to allow the City to create digital inclusion programs and to provide City residents, especially those in vulnerable populations, with access to high-speed internet;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2019-2020 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for S. 1167 (Murray), the Digital Equity Act, which would create new federal grant programs to help promote digital equity and support digital inclusion programs.

19-0002-576

APR 30 2019

PRESENTED BY: _____

BOB BLUMENFIELD
Councilmember, 3rd District

SECONDED BY: _____