Good Morning Council Committee members, my name is Waldo Gonzalez and I am representing InnerCity Struggle (ICS), a community organization based in the Eastside of Los Angeles. I will be speaking in support of item #2. ICS serves some of the highest need and most vulnerable communities in Los Angeles, as such, the communities that we serve bear a higher burden when resources for education, health and technology are lacking. The COVID-19 crisis has exposed just how vulnerable our communities are to being affected by the public health crises and the need that has risen for thousands of families and students who were already affected by inequitable community conditions. ICS stands in full support of the creation of a City of LA Digital Equity Plan, and urges members to vote to pass this important motion to ensure digital equity for all. Reliable internet access is of utmost importance in a time when many of our families have had to share limited broadband access for school, access to healthcare and work as they shelter at home. However, we have seen that both pricing and quality have been a major challenge for families who are struggling to provide because of COVID-19 economic disruptions, and internet providers’ spotty service in historically underserved communities. The City needs to create a Digital Equity Plan and make the financial investments necessary to ensure broadband for all, especially for our most vulnerable communities. Unfortunately, digital inequity will not disappear when our children return to school, and we must take action to ensure that we address and prevent the further widening of educational opportunity gaps that this public health crisis has caused. Today’s motion is a first step in the right direction, and we applaud Councilman Blumenfield's leadership in asking the City to take action to address digital inequity. We stand ready to work with the City on this important effort. Thank you.
Communication from Public

Name: Gabrielle Seiwert
Date Submitted: 02/04/2021 10:21 AM
Council File No: 19-0665-S1
Comments for Public Posting: I'm calling in support of Item 2. My name is Gabrielle and I'm an organizer with United Parents and Students. Thank you for taking this first step to tackle digital equity in Los Angeles. As we've seen in the pandemic, digital access is incredibly important, and allows residents to gain information about community resources, our current health crisis, and so many other opportunities, and allows students to access their education, which of course is vitally important during this time. Unfortunately digital access is not equal across our city. Internet is expensive, which during a pandemic when many are struggling to pay rent and put food on the table makes it difficult to afford. And quality of internet is also a huge problem. In far too many areas, internet quality is slow and inconsistent or in some cases, there are complete dead zones. Of course, especially for students trying to learn right now, it becomes impossible to access their education without the infrastructure and resources they need. I urge you to pass this motion but I also urge you to make the financial investments necessary for ensuring broadband for all, especially our most vulnerable and underserved communities. We also ask that you find ways to leverage your power over Internet Service Providers - at minimum, we need data transparency (who they serve and what they charge) but ultimately, they should be responsible for ensuring every community in our City is connected equitably. Digital inequity will not disappear when our children return to school - we all know the ability to thrive and access resources requires dependable and high-quality internet access. I urge you to take action as soon as possible to address this pressing issue. Thank you.
I am a member of United Parents and Students and I want to thank councilmembers Blumenfeld, Price, and Nithya Ramen for addressing the digital divide in our city. As someone who was born and raised in South LA, I have seen firsthand the effects of the digital divide in low-income communities when it comes to education and work-from home. South LA is overlooked by internet companies and currently lacks the proper infrastructure to provide high-speed internet, leaving families with no connection to resources, work support, or education support. In addition, the cost of the internet is too expensive for families in South LA, who are also currently struggling to keep food on the table, pay rent, and work during this pandemic. Internet isn’t a luxury, but a basic human necessity and utility. We all rely on the internet for work, healthcare, finances, and especially education. That is why I support the motion to create a Digital Equity Plan and make financial investments that puts my community - OUR communities - at the table with everyone else.
Good morning, members of the Committee. My name is Sandy Mendoza, Director of Advocacy with Families In Schools. For two decades Families In Schools has been a strong advocate for education policies and measures that ensure all children, particularly underserved and children of color, have access to a quality education in their neighborhood. First, I would like to extend our appreciation to Councilmember Blumenfield for his leadership in bringing forward a motion to create a plan on digital equity in Los Angeles. We believe that digital equity is the civil rights issue of our time. It is as basic a right as having electricity, water, food, and housing. In the greatest country in the world -- that created the internet and is home to the world’s greatest tech companies – it is unfathomable that we should have thousands of low-income families and people of color living in homes without basic access to the internet. The pandemic gives us the opportunity to accelerate addressing digital inequities impacting families on a quality of life scale. In Spring 2000, we saw thousands of kids who couldn’t participate in distance learning because they were lacking devices and access to the Internet. And this impacts parents and caregivers who need the Internet to connect with educators, school resources, and beyond. We are in a crisis because without internet, kids will be falling further behind; and for students with special needs, this can have severe long-term consequences. We need leadership and action in the form of a digital equity plan. It is time we put our money where our children are and make the financial investments necessary for ensuring broadband for all, especially for our most vulnerable and underserved communities. Thank you.