

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: March 10, 2021

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

FROM: Sharon M. Tso 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No: 21-0002-S58
Assignment No: 21-03-0195

SUBJECT: Resolution to support AB 14

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (Blumenfield – Cedillo) to include in the City’s 2021-2022 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry), which would prioritize deployment of broadband infrastructure in vulnerable and unserved rural and urban communities by extending the ongoing collection of funds deposited into the California Advanced Services Fund to provide communities with grants necessary to bridge the digital divide.

SUMMARY

The Resolution (Blumenfield – Cedillo), introduced on March 3, 2021, notes that roughly one in eight homes in California lack internet access. AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry), the Internet for All Act, states that deployment of broadband infrastructure is vital to connect California's workforce to gainful employment, harness the lifesaving technology of telemedicine, democratize distance learning, enable precision agriculture, and sustain economic transactions in times of emergencies. The Resolution (Blumenfield – Cedillo) notes that the negative effects of the digital divide, which already disproportionately impact communities of color, have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

AB 14, the Internet for All Act of 2021, would continue the collection of funds for the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF), which is administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The legislation would require CASF infrastructure projects to prioritize projects in unserved areas. AB 14 would also require that CASF funded projects promote remote learning and telehealth, in addition to economic growth, job creation, and the substantial social benefits of advanced information and communications technologies. The Resolution therefore requests that the City support AB 14.

BACKGROUND

Existing law requires the CPUC to develop, implement, and administer the CASF program to encourage deployment of high-quality advanced communications services to all Californians that will promote economic growth, job creation, and the substantial social benefits of advanced information and communications technologies. Existing law further authorizes the CPUC to impose a surcharge to collect \$330M for deposit into the CASF beginning January 1, 2018, and continuing through the 2022 calendar year.


AB 14 would require that the CASF program be used to fund projects in unserved areas, with the goal of providing broadband access to 98% of California households in each consortia region. The legislation would also delete the CPUC's authorization to impose a surcharge to collect \$330M for deposit into the CASF through 2022, and would instead authorize the CPUC to collect the surcharge in an amount not to exceed an unspecified percentage of an end user's intrastate telecommunications service costs to fund the accounts within the CASF. AB 14 would further authorize the CPUC to issue up to \$1B in bonds secured by this surcharge for broadband deployment and adoption.

In order to promote democratized distance learning, AB 14 would authorize local education agencies to report to the California Department of Education with their students' estimated needs for computing devices and internet connectivity adequate for at-home learning. The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development would also be required to develop recommendations and a model for streamlined local land use approval and construction permit processes for projects related to broadband infrastructure deployment and connectivity.

AB 14 would require the CPUC to prioritize middle-mile broadband infrastructure after providing broadband connectivity to 98% of California households in each consortia region. It would further require that the CPUC utilize CASF funding to maximize investments in new, robust, and scalable infrastructure.

BILL STATUS

12/07/20	Introduced.
1/11/21	Referred to the Committees on Communications and Conveyance, and Local Government.


Tristan Noack
Analyst

SMT:tcjn
Attachment: Resolution

RESOLUTION

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 or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry), the Internet for All Act, introduced on December 7, 2020, notes that deployment of broadband infrastructure is vital to connect California's workforce to gainful employment, harness the lifesaving technology of telemedicine, democratize distance learning, enable precision agriculture, and sustain economic transactions in times of emergencies; and

WHEREAS, roughly one in eight California homes lack internet access; and

WHEREAS, the negative effects of the digital divide, which already disproportionately impact communities of color, have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that steps are taken at all levels of government to address the deleterious effects of leaving so many families in California disconnected; and

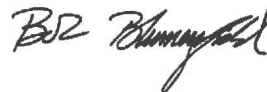
WHEREAS, the City has repeatedly acted in the interest of bridging the digital divide, be it through its own action, or in support of State and Federal legislation; and

WHEREAS, tens of thousands of students in Los Angeles lack adequate access to the resources necessary for their education; and

WHEREAS, the Internet for All Act would target communities that are unserved or underserved in order to provide internet access to all homes in California; and

WHEREAS, as California looks to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be more important than ever to ensure that all families have access to an internet connection at home;

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 2021-2022 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry), which would prioritize the deployment of broadband infrastructure in vulnerable and unserved rural and urban communities by extending the ongoing collection of funds deposited into the California Advanced Services Fund to provide communities with grants necessary to bridge the digital divide.



PRESENTED BY: _____

BOB BLUMENFIELD
Councilmember, 3rd District



SECONDED BY: _____

MAR 03 2021

tcjn

