

TELECOMMUNICATIONS, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY (TST)

Resolution TST-24-06

EMPOWERING LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) has consistently advocated for the inclusion of broadband support for low-income Americans, recognizing the pivotal role broadband plays in contemporary society;

WHEREAS, NBCSL's 2023 policy resolution, PERMANENT BROADBAND SUBSIDY TO SUPPORT LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES, made urgent the need to make a congressionally funded broadband subsidy, alongside broadband adoption and learning solutions for those experiencing digital inequity;

WHEREAS, an Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB) was enacted on May 12, 2021 as a temporary subsidy on monthly broadband services for qualifying low-income households to ensure they could afford broadband connections needed for work, school, healthcare, etc.;

WHEREAS, Congress modified and extended the EBB Program and renamed it the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to make broadband service and connected devices available to low-income households at affordable, discounted prices from providers that opt to participate in the program;

WHEREAS, the ACP benefit provides a subsidy of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands;

WHEREAS, eligible households can also receive a one-time subsidy of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price, and the program is limited to one monthly service and one device discount per household;

WHEREAS, eligibility for the program is for households at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or if a member of the household meets at least one of the following criteria: received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year; meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income internet program; participates in identified assistance programs (i.e., SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, WIC, Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits, or Lifeline); participates in a qualifying assistance program and lives on Qualifying Tribal Land (i.e., Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, and income based Tribal Head Start;

WHEREAS, more than 20 million households (as of September 4, 2023) have enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program, and the funds in this program are expected to be exhausted by in 2024;

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WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has taken proactive measures to enhance awareness and enrollment in the ACP program, emphasizing outreach through trusted intermediaries such as digital navigators, community-based organizations, and government partners; and

WHEREAS, broadband access continues to be a critical need for low-income communities, enabling them to participate fully in the digital economy, work, learn, and engage in recreational activities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NBCSL calls upon the President and the United States Congress to make adequate, congressionally funded broadband subsidies long-term components of benefits, alongside broadband adoption, broadband deployment to disadvantaged communities, and learning solutions, for those experiencing digital inequity; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

Resolution ID: TST-24-06

Sponsored by: Rep. K.C. Ohaebosim (KS)

Policy Committee: Telecommunications, Science, and Technology (TST)