

## **Closing the Digital Divide Through the Infrastructure Package**

### **Congress Must Promote Broadband Affordability to Close the Digital Divide**

Even if broadband is available, it is not always affordable, and consequently is not adopted. About [30 million](#) households do not subscribe to broadband when it is available, [including](#) 29% of rural homes and 28% of non-rural homes.

- Congress should provide at least \$15 billion to continue the **Emergency Broadband Benefit**, and provide the FCC with ongoing authority to modify the program over time.
- Congress should adopt the following to allow any broadband benefit to succeed:
  - Require relevant agencies to enter into data matching agreements with USAC to enable **automatic verification**. [Studies show](#) a majority of consumers who undergo a manual process abandon their applications.
  - Increase enrollment by authorizing funding for **Digital Navigators** and by **advertising the availability** of a broadband subsidy.
  - Require providers to make all plans eligible for the benefit, or at least allow subscribers to return to previously priced plans, in order to **prevent upselling**.

### **Congress Must Promote Digital Inclusion to Close the Digital Divide**

Even if broadband is available and affordable, individuals and families can't connect because they can't afford a computer, or don't have the digital literacy skills they need to engage online.

- Congress should provide at least \$5 billion for the **Digital Equity Act** over five years.
- Congress has previously supported the purchase of devices, and should create a \$5 billion **voucher program** to support low-income individuals in purchasing a **computer or tablet** directly from a retail outlet or refurbisher. This program should ensure that eligibility is on an individual basis so family members can connect simultaneously.

### **Congress Must Promote Future Proof Broadband Deployment to Close the Digital Divide**

Although broadband is critical, our nation has a large digital divide, leaving those on the wrong side of it struggling to connect. Currently, more than [42 million](#) Americans don't have the ability to purchase broadband, and many others struggle with slow, unreliable connections.

- Investments in broadband deployment should meet household and business needs now and in the future -- that means at least **100/100 Mbps** speed.
- Although competition is key to lowering prices, [more than](#) 20% of households have access to just one fixed provider offering broadband speeds. To promote competition, Congress should prioritize deployment funds for **open access infrastructure** projects.
- Congress should ensure that communities are empowered to bring broadband to their residents where broadband providers are reluctant to serve. Congress can preempt local and state bans on **municipally-owned broadband**.
- Congress should direct the FCC to promulgate rules to **prevent digital redlining**, so that everyone, regardless of their income or demographic characteristics, can have access to high-speed, reliable broadband.