

**Utilizing Existing Infrastructure and Resources to Accelerate Digital Equity**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the severity of inequities in digital access and infrastructure, and the existing market is limited in its offerings of affordable and reliable high-speed broadband service plans to underserved communities in the County of Los Angeles. Too many of our constituents are unfairly disadvantaged and experiencing hardships due to lack of quality internet service. The internet is essential for accessing education, employment opportunities, health services, financial resources, support networks, and commerce.

The County of Los Angeles is a major consumer of internet services. As the Board of Supervisors has placed digital equity among the County’s highest priorities, an opportunity exists for the internet service industry to demonstrate a mutual commitment and offer more substantial contributions to addressing barriers to broadband access and affordability. Internet service providers are well-positioned to help dismantle the digital divide, particularly companies that have existing infrastructure and coverage capacity in the impacted areas within the County.

MOTION

MITCHELL \_\_\_\_\_

KUEHL \_\_\_\_\_

HAHN \_\_\_\_\_

BARGER \_\_\_\_\_

SOLIS \_\_\_\_\_

The Internal Services Department (ISD) administers the County's Delete The Divide initiative to empower youth, young adults and small businesses in communities adversely impacted by the digital divide. This initiative focuses on communities where 20.1% to 100% of the households lack internet services. According to data from the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey, there are an estimated 365,000 households without internet access in Los Angeles County.

In alignment with the Delete The Divide initiative, ISD has been in discussions with various corporations, organizations and consultants about utilizing existing resources and County assets to accelerate the availability of affordable broadband to households in need. There are significant considerations to executing this effort, but it can feasibly be done in a shorter time period with relatively lower financial investments as compared to other types of buildouts and demonstration projects. The primary goal is to act with urgency to ensure that constituents have equity in immediate access to reliable high-speed internet service, while more comprehensive strategic efforts are in progress for infrastructure development and legislative actions.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors:

Instruct the Internal Services Department, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and County Counsel, to report back in 30 days with viable options for the County of Los Angeles to facilitate residential access to reliable broadband service in low-income communities where greater than 20% of the households lack internet service, based on data from the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

The report back should identify options, cost estimates, and, to the extent possible, a funding source that would enable implementation of internet access to begin within the current calendar year of 2021. The proposed options should be specific to a County-administered municipal broadband service, public-private partnerships, and amendments to existing agreements with internet service providers.

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