



July 21, 2020

The Honorable Miguel Santiago, Chair
Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee
State Capitol, Room 6027
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: SB 1130 (Gonzalez)—Support

Dear Assemblymember Santiago:

Consumer Reports¹ writes in support of SB 1130. For years, Consumer Reports (CR) has worked with the California Legislature, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and Congress to ensure that all consumers have access to affordable, quality broadband service.² As millions of Americans have shifted to working, learning, and receiving medical care at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the necessity and value of a reliable, affordable internet connection has never been clearer. Consumers across California need better access to more affordable internet connections. Consistent with these policy goals, CR is proud to endorse SB 1130, which will help close the digital divide and connect more Californians to the internet at lower prices.

Hundreds of thousands of consumers, including many Californians in both rural and urban areas, still lack adequate access to high-speed internet.³ Historically, internet service providers (ISPs) have claimed to lack adequate financial incentives to build broadband internet infrastructure in

¹ Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit membership organization that works side by side with consumers to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world. For over 80 years, CR has provided evidence-based product testing and ratings, rigorous research, hard-hitting investigative journalism, public education, and steadfast policy action on behalf of consumers' interests. Unconstrained by advertising, CR has exposed landmark public health and safety issues and strives to be a catalyst for pro-consumer changes in the marketplace.

² Press release, Consumer Reports, *Consumer Reports Supports Legislation To Make Internet Access More Affordable And Accessible*, (June 29, 2020), https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/press_release/consumer-reports-supports-legislation-to-make-internet-access-more-affordable-and-accessible/.

³ CAL. PUB. UTILS. COMM'N., 2019 ANNUAL REPORT CALIFORNIA ADVANCED SERVICES FUND 11 (April 2020), https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/uploadedFiles/CPUC_Public_Website/Content/Utilities_and_Industries/Communications_-_Telecommunications_and_Broadband/2019%20Annual%20Report%20California%20Advanced%20Services%20Fund%202.pdf (finding that 874,022 California households lacked internet speeds of at least 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream).

rural areas due to a low return on investment. SB 1130 offers a solution to this problem by allowing local governments or co-ops to obtain California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) funds to build this infrastructure, without having to wait and rely on large ISPs to do so.

This bill would also increase high-speed internet access for Californians by expanding the number of areas and households eligible for CASF funding. The CASF, which is administered by the California Public Utilities Commission, currently defines an “unserved” area as one that does not have an ISP offering downstream speeds of at least 6 megabits per second (Mbps), and upstream speeds of at least 1 Mbps. These speeds are insufficient and obsolete in 2020 because most streaming video applications that people use for remote learning, work, and doctor’s visits require speeds of at least 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream. Under this bill, projects seeking a CASF grant would be required to deploy infrastructure capable of providing those minimum speeds (25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream).

Consumers strongly support expanded access to broadband internet service. More than 63,000 concerned citizens signed a recent Consumer Reports/Access Now petition to boost access and affordability of this critical communication service during the COVID-19 crisis.⁴ For these reasons and more, we respectfully urge you to support SB 1130. Please do not hesitate to contact CR should you need any additional information.

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan Schwantes
Senior Policy Counsel
Consumer Reports

Cc: The Honorable Lena A. Gonzalez
Members, Assembly Communications and Conveyance Committee
Edmond Cheung, Chief Consultant

⁴ Petition from Jennifer Brody, Legislative Manager, Access Now, and Jonathan Schwantes, Senior Policy Counsel, Consumer Reports, to FCC Chairman and Comm’rs (May 14, 2020), <https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FINAL.letter.FCC-petition-delivery-lifeline.51420.pdf>