

Whereas, access to broadband internet service is no longer a luxury in order to participate in today's connected society, particularly remote work, education and healthcare;

Whereas, according to latest reporting, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) estimates there has been progress towards closing the digital divide, with fewer than 14.5 million Americans lacking access to broadband;¹

Whereas, there remain unserved US communities that require broadband service;

Whereas, broadband service may not available in those areas due to the high cost of building the necessary infrastructure across sparsely populated areas of the country that do not have a high population density and/or have challenging topography;

Whereas, recognizing this need, Congress passed and President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in November 2021 allocating \$65 billion to expanding broadband access;

Whereas, the IIJA also created the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program providing \$42.45 billion to expand broadband access to all 50 states and US territories;

Whereas, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is the federal agency charged with overseeing disbursement of BEAD funds to US states and territories;

Whereas, NTIA issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) providing guidance to US states and territories on BEAD program implementation in May 2022;

Whereas, the NTIA NOFO advised US states and territories to give preference to grant applications that utilize fiber technologies;

Whereas, Congress's intent was that the IIJA and BEAD embrace technological neutrality;

Whereas, US states and territories' Five-Year Action Plans for BEAD funding are currently being developed;

Whereas, broadband is not a one-size-fits all service, and different states and communities with differing terrain and topography will seek a range of available broadband solutions in order to bridge the digital divide;

Whereas, a total reliance on fiber deployments for BEAD could potentially raise the upfront costs of addressing US broadband needs by as much as \$60 billion and also cause significant delays in reaching unserved areas;²

¹ Federal Communications Commission, Fourteenth Broadband Deployment Report (2021), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-annual-broadband-report-shows-digital-divide-rapidly-closing>.

² "Getting to the Broadband Future Efficiently with BEAD Funding," William Lehr, MIT, January 2023, https://www.wispa.org/docs/Lehr_White_Paper_Final.pdf.

Whereas, access and adoption of high-speed broadband leads to increased employment and income;³

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the African American Mayors Association (AAMA) supports the need to ensure broadband access in creating economically sustainable communities of color;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED AAMA encourages all US states and territories to adopt a technology neutral policy position in its Five-Year Action Plan for BEAD funding and consider which technology is most appropriate for its citizens and businesses;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that copies of this Resolution be dispatched to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, Members of Congress, House and Senate Leadership, and other elected officials as appropriate.

³ NIH, National Library of Medicine, "Broadband adoption and availability: Impacts on rural employment during COVID-19," "...broadband has been shown to have a multitude of economic benefits, including higher employment, higher median incomes, increased numbers of firms and establishments, and increased entrepreneurial activity," <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8810350/#bib23>.