



National  
Urban League

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Dear California Broadband Leaders,

The National Urban League (NUL) is proud to be a leader in advocating for digital equity and solutions to close the digital divide, particularly for historically underserved populations. We are eager to continue serving as a resource and partner in these efforts, especially as state and local lawmakers and government agencies distribute new funding available through the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) to establish programs to help connect more people in more places.

NUL was an early advocate for the IIJA and issued many recommendations that were ultimately reflected in this historic legislation. Notably, in our *Lewis Latimer Plan for Digital Equity and Inclusion*, we provided comprehensive and detailed analyses and solutions to address unequal availability and adoption of home broadband for low-income communities, rural communities, and communities of color.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, our plan addressed the need for all communities to benefit economically from broadband deployment not only as consumers, but also as workers and business owners. We are pleased that this federal legislation has allocated substantial resources to address these critical issues, including \$42.45 billion to increase broadband access and support broadband adoption, \$14.2 billion toward the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which makes broadband more affordable for low-income

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<sup>1</sup> *The Lewis Latimer Plan for Digital Equity and Inclusion*, National Urban League (March 30, 2021), <https://nul.org/program/lewis-latimer-plan>.



consumers, and \$2.75 billion for digital equity and inclusion efforts which will help address a wide range of issues ranging from digital skills for aging populations to workforce development.

To build on this positive momentum, we developed a set of recommendations and best practices on how the broadband funding from the IIJA would be most effectively spent to drive digital equity where it matters most – connecting unserved and underserved populations while also increasing broadband adoption.<sup>2</sup> We are glad to see that many of the National Urban League’s recommendations have already been implemented nationally and in various states.

We continue to encourage lawmakers, government agencies, and community partners to work together to drive broadband adoption, which will help ensure communities have equitable access and participation across the digital landscape. These efforts should also include participation in the workforce and contracting opportunities presented by IIJA.

Today, even with a plethora of initiatives making high-speed internet affordable to Americans – including ACP and its predecessor, the Emergency Broadband Benefit –at least 32.7 million households or 71.6 million people who already have home broadband service available to them have not adopted broadband, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey. In contrast, the FCC estimates that 2.5% of people in the US (or 8.1 million people) do not currently have access to high-speed broadband. This clearly demonstrates that adoption is a critical component of closing the digital divide.

The cost of digital exclusion has increased exponentially over the years especially as many critical resources and opportunities have moved to digital-only platforms for employment, education, health care, and government services. There are several complex and intersecting factors that leave the country with concerning broadband adoption rates ranging from the lack of necessary and ever-changing digital skills, lack of awareness about government subsidies that make service and devices more affordable, language barriers, housing insecurity, privacy concerns, and more. As a trusted resource in the community, the National Urban League and our affiliates can help identify broadband adoption barriers and implement solutions to get more people online.

We encourage you to work collaboratively with trusted community partners like our Urban League affiliates. Our affiliates serve on the ground as leading stakeholders with expertise in building effective coalitions and partnerships. Urban League affiliates are also highly skilled in delivering tailored solutions for their communities and developing culturally relevant outreach strategies, including through their prior work as digital navigators under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

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<sup>2</sup> *Addressing the Broadband Adoption Gap in Your State*, National Urban League (June 2022), <https://nul.org/program/lewis-latimer-plan>.



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The Urban League movement stands ready to work with you on this once-in-a-generation funding opportunity to bring the benefits of the digital age to everyone across America.

Sincerely,

Marc H. Morial  
President & CEO  
National Urban League