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August 9, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry) Broadband Services: California Advanced Services Fund.
Notice of SUPPORT (As Amended 6/17/21)

Dear Senator Portantino,

The City of Arcata is pleased to support AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry), which would prioritize the deployment of broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved communities throughout California through the ongoing collection of the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) surcharge.

As local governments mobilized to address the spread of COVID-19, it became apparent that many communities lack access to reliable and affordable broadband service and struggle to stay connected to school, work, and healthcare in this new digital environment. While Californians are increasingly using the internet to connect with others, local governments have taken to online platforms to ensure civic engagement during these unprecedented times.

AB 14 is a step in the right direction and ensures the continued collection of an essential source of broadband funding. This measure not only authorizes the ongoing collection of the existing CASF surcharge but also makes it easier for local governments to access these grants. Additionally, AB 14 would create a Broadband Bond Financing and Securitization Account to fund broadband infrastructure deployment by local governments. These funding opportunities would allow local governments to continue to play a vital role in deploying broadband infrastructure in their communities.

In addition to these essential funding opportunities, AB 14 also would expand the definition of "unserved." Expanding this definition increases eligibility for CASF grants, which are currently reserved for areas with dial-up speeds or lower, leaving out many communities where Californians struggle to stay connected with slightly faster but still obsolete speeds. This measure would also take important steps to address local education agencies' connectivity needs, increase service plan transparency by internet service providers, and ensure anchor institutions are eligible for CASF funding.

While the City is unlikely to benefit directly from AB 14, the City supports expansion of broadband access to underserved communities. The Northcoast has several projects underway that are integral to

the backbone network to support expanded access. Arcata is hosting the primary data center associated with the transpacific fiber project. The extension of this network along highway 299 provides ample opportunity to connect such underserved communities. The CASF program will provide opportunity for these communities.

For these reasons, the City of Arcata supports AB 14.

Respectfully,



Brett Watson, Mayor
City of Arcata

cc:

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