



March 16, 2021

The Honorable Ben Hueso
Chair, Senate Energy, Utilities, and Communications Committee
State Capitol, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 4 (Gonzalez): Broadband Communications – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hueso:

The California Telehealth Policy Coalition is proud to support SB 4, which prioritizes the deployment of broadband infrastructure in California’s most vulnerable and underserved communities, by extending the ongoing collection of funds deposited into the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) to provide communities with grants necessary to bridge the digital divide.

As a group of over 100 diverse organizations dedicated to advancing telehealth policy in California, we recognize the key role that broadband and internet access play in connecting Californians to the care they need, especially during the pandemic where telehealth has played a critical part in ensuring Californians have safe access to healthcare services.

SB 4 recognizes that reliable internet connectivity is a basic necessity now, and that this will remain the case even after the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided. The Public Policy Institute of California reports that only 59% of rural households in California have access to broadband speeds of at least 25mbps/2mbps.¹ This means that over 40% of rural Californians often lack access to broadband speeds that can provide the minimal bandwidth required to stream live video telehealth visits, visits which are often conducted while other household members are using the internet for education and work purposes.

In light of these issues, the Coalition adopted and supports the following principles:

- **Broadband should be treated as a utility:** policies must treat broadband as a utility necessary for Californians to access health care and other services and needs in the 21st century
- **Robust infrastructure should be in place to serve all Californians:** policies must expand the physical infrastructure needed to bring internet access to underserved populations

¹ Justin Goss, Courtney Lee, Niu Gao. Just the Facts: California’s Digital Divide. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-digital-divide/>. Published March 2019. Accessed November 5, 2020.

and geographies

- **Californians should have equitable access to broadband:** policies ensure increased access to broadband for underserved communities, both urban and rural
- **Broadband should be affordable:** policies should support making high-quality internet access affordable for all Californians, including the use of subsidies and/or affordable price setting
- **Government should fund broadband projects that rely on best-in-class, high-speed standards:** policies should ensure that infrastructure, accessibility and affordability reinforce the need for high-speed, best in class technologies

Telehealth has been shown to reduce existing health inequities, and according to the CDC, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has only increased barriers to healthcare for the underserved, including racial and ethnic minority groups. Meanwhile, the potential to reach those communities through telehealth is hindered by the fact that it is these most vulnerable Californians who remain disproportionately disconnected from broadband. SB 4 is a critical step towards expediting the deployment of broadband infrastructure throughout the state and providing a vital pathway to connect Californian's to necessary health care, as well as a number of other important services. For these reasons, we are pleased to support SB 4 and respectfully request your aye vote on this essential legislation.

Sincerely,

The California Telehealth Policy Coalition

MEMBERS SUPPORTING THIS BILL:

2020 Mom

Adventist Health

Advocates for Health, Economics and Development (AHEAD) Alliance for Patient Access

Alameda Health Consortium

America's Physician Groups

American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA)

American Academy of Pediatrics, California Chapter 2 (AAP-CA2)

ARC

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles

Association of California Healthcare Districts

BKY Consulting

Burnish Creative

CA Medicaid Health Plan

California Academy of PAs

California Alliance of Child and Family Services

California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT)



California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
California Children's Hospital
California Children Trust
California Chronic Care Coalition
California Chronic Care Coalition San Diego County
California Commission on Aging
California Dental Hygienists' Association
California Health Collaborative
California Health Information Association
California Hospital Association
California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Association
California Medical Association
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Primary Care Association
California School Based Health Alliance
California Telehealth Network
Camicia
Center for Autism
Center for Care Innovations
Center for Health and Technology
Center for Technology and Aging
Central California Alliance for Health
Children's Specialty Care Coalition
Cisco
Citizen Advocacy Center
Clinical Informatics, Inc.
ClinIQ
Coalition for Multi-State Licensure in California Nurses Taskforce
Cognivive
CommonSpirit Health
Community Health Center Network
Community Health Partnership
Connecting to Care
Digital Health Strategy and Alliances
DirectDerm
Doctor on Demand
Easterseals Southern California
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Essential Access Health
Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center of Caregiving
For Hims/For Hers
Granite Wellness Centers
Health Care Interpreter Network
Health Net/California Health & Wellness



Health Reveal
HIMSS, Northern California Chapter
IDEATE California
LeadingAge California
Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
Manifest Medex
Maven Project
Mile High Health Alliance
mPulse
Multi-state Licensure for California Nurses Taskforce
MVM Strategy Group
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Health Law Program
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
NL Short Public Affairs
North East Medical Services (NEMS)
Noteware Government Relations
OCHIN
Pacific Health Consulting Group
Partnership HealthPlan of California
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Providence
Psychiatric Physicians Alliance of California
Quio
Rady Children's Hospital - San Diego
Resolution Care
River City Medical Group
Sacramento Case Management Society of America
San Francisco Health Plan
Schoen Consulting
Scripps Health
Sharp HealthCare
Stanford Children's Health
Stanford Health Care
Sutter Health
TeleMed2U
Telemedicine.com, Inc.
The Children's Partnership
The Law Offices of Jeffrey Sinsheimer
Valley Health Team
West Health
Wildflower Health