

COUNTY OF SONOMA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

575 ADMINISTRATION DRIVE, RM. 100A
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95403

(707) 565-2241
FAX (707) 565-3778



MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

SHIRLEE ZANE
CHAIR
JAMES GORE
VICE CHAIR
DAVID RABBITT
SUSAN GORIN
LYNDA HOPKINS

June 28, 2017

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 4140
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1665 – Retract Support

Dear Assemblymember Garcia,

On behalf of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to inform you we must regretfully remove our support of AB 1665 (The Internet for All Now Act of 2017), as amended.

The County of Sonoma knows first-hand how important it is for rural communications and low-income neighborhoods to have high-speed Internet access. Sonoma County still has 7,299 unserved or underserved households. A further drill-down of data indicates 4,438 households are totally without broadband services – 2.8% of the county's total households. Our goal is to provide improved connectivity through public/private partnerships, grants and continued encouragement of incumbent providers to extend their footprint to include unserved and underserved households.

In our region (Marin, Mendocino, Napa, and Sonoma counties), the reality of these recent amendments means that approximately 11,000 homes will become ineligible for funding for state-of-the-art networks. A recently added provision to AB 1665 lowers the definition of broadband in California, effectively disqualifying communities with inadequate services from state funding. Another provision allows incumbent carriers an unspecified amount of time to deploy network upgrades if a carrier signals it intends to apply for state grant funds, essentially giving large carriers the ability to veto any new investments in our communities.

We recognize and appreciate the need for bill authors to often negotiate in good faith among stakeholders to reach consensus on specific provisions of a bill. However, we urge you to support a version of the bill that more closely aligns with the original Internet for All Now Act (which was submitted by the California Emerging Technology Fund in consultation with civic leaders and community organizations throughout the State) to reflect an appropriate and workable balance between community needs and industry interests. We feel that balance was lost in the amendment process, which negatively affects rural counties. For these reasons, we must remove our support of the bill until further amended.

Sincerely,

SHIRLEE ZANE, Chair
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

CC: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Mike McGuire, California State Senate
The Honorable Bill Dodd, California State Senate
The Honorable Marc Levine, California State Assembly
The Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, California State Assembly
The Honorable Jim Wood, California State Assembly
Paul Yoder & Karen Lange, Shaw/Yoder/Antwih, Inc.