



April 8, 2021

The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell
Chair, Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1560 (Daly) – SUPPORT - Distance learning: pupil access: computing devices and broadband internet service

Dear Chairman O'Donnell,

On behalf of the South Orange County Economic Coalition (Coalition) I am writing in strong support of AB 1560, which will help effectively, sustainably, and equitably bridge the digital divide, by removing barriers to broadband adoption and bring more Californian's online.

As South Orange County's leading voice of business, the South Orange County Economic Coalition is the driving force of advocating for a strong local economy. We focus on four key areas: Advocacy, Education, Representation and Progress for South Orange County issues, initiatives and projects. We support and encourage a streamlined government process. Representing hundreds of employees, we are an alliance of businesses, community thought-leaders and stakeholders committed to enhancing the region's economic vitality and protecting its exceptional quality of life.

According to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), there are 2.1 million households in California that have access to the Internet, but do not subscribe to the service. There are generally three reasons that consumers do not subscribe to the internet – affordability, non-English speaking and digital literacy.

AB 1560 would provide for an immediate pathway to internet connectivity by authorizing the state of California to enter into sponsored service agreements to pay for free internet service for low-income K-12 students and their families. With the federal government recently authorizing funding through the American Rescue Plan Act to support state activity, significant funding is available to support broadband initiatives.

I urge you to support AB 1560 to remove barriers to broadband adoption and bring more Californians online now. This bill will do more to immediately expand digital inclusion for families of K-12 students than any other proposed policy solutions This forward-looking policy will continue to advance digital opportunities for all Californians, and for these reasons and more we **support AB 1560**.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Thomas
Executive Director