



April 7, 2021

The Honorable Scott Weiner
Chair, Housing Committee
State Capitol, Room 2209
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 743 (Bradford) Housing developments: broadband adoption: grant program – SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Weiner,

On behalf of the South Orange County Economic Coalition (Coalition), I am writing in strong support of SB 743, which will help effectively, sustainably, and equitably bridge the digital divide by removing barriers to broadband adoption for low-income public housing residents.

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.

SB 743 will build on Senator Bradford's 2013 legislation funding broadband infrastructure for public housing developments not already wired for service. This is an important next step, given that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) found that while more than 95% of Californians have access to high-speed, reliable broadband technology, the lack of digital literacy, awareness of reduced-cost programs, and access to computing devices remain barriers to broadband adoption.

This comprehensive bill will address the remaining breadth of barriers for public housing residents, including access to free or low-cost broadband internet service, digital literacy programs – including the transformation of common areas into computer labs with training resources, and computers and other devices through grants from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (CDHCD).

California has been working tirelessly to close the digital divide, and it is fundamental to address the remaining challenges to digital engagement through targeted and intentional interventions, including those with existing access to high-speed, reliable broadband connectivity. This forward-looking policy will continue to advance digital opportunities for all Californians, and for these reasons and more we **support SB 743**.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Thomas
Executive Director