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## **Assemblymember Mia Bonta Introduces Landmark “Digital Discrimination” Legislation in California**

*The historic legislation is backed by digital equity advocates from across the State that recognize the policy is crucial to closing the digital divide.*

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(Sacramento, CA) - Yesterday, Assemblymember Mia Bonta (D-Oakland) introduced AB 2239, groundbreaking legislation that will make California the first state in the nation to codify the Federal Communication Commission’s newly adopted definition of digital discrimination as California law.

Last November, the FCC defined “digital discrimination of access” as, “policies or practices, not justified by genuine issues of technical or economic feasibility, that (1) differentially impact consumers; access to broadband internet access service based on their income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin or (2) are intended to have such differential impact.” These federal rules were adopted following a multi-year rulemaking process during which the FCC received and engaged extensive formal input from digital equity advocates, industry stakeholders, and others.

“Despite historic public investments to close the digital divide, low-income communities of color across the state remain disproportionately disconnected, stranded on the wrong side of the digital divide,” said Assemblymember Bonta. “To the extent that there are policies and practices that serve to exacerbate this persistent inequity – even when that is not the intent – we must put an end to them. That is my intent with AB 2239.”

NextGen California Executive Director Arnie Sowell emphasized the significance of California taking the lead on tackling digital discrimination, noting that “it is appropriate that California breaks ground as the first state to adopt the FCC’s definition of digital discrimination as our own to ensure our Broadband for All efforts result in truly equal access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet for every Californian. NextGen California applauds Assemblymember Bonta for her leadership.”

In January, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously passed the nation’s first city-level digital discrimination [policy](#). The Los Angeles motion referenced several studies demonstrating that industry pricing practices worsen the digital divide by exacerbating



the challenge of broadband affordability, as “providers systematically offer worse service - slower, delivered over older technology - to low-income communities at the same price that they offered fast, reliable service to higher-income communities”.

“CCF applauds Assemblymember Bonta’s bold leadership along with digital equity and community advocates across California to end digital discrimination,” said Miguel A. Santana, President and CEO of the California Community Foundation. “This bill will make California the first state in the nation to take this step, following closely on the heels of the City of Los Angeles’ groundbreaking digital discrimination ordinance. Access to the internet is a 21st-century civil right, and we’re proud to stand with our communities in this vital work.”

Establishing a definition of digital discrimination for the State will be instrumental in ensuring California’s historic investments of nearly \$8 billion in state and federal funds in broadband infrastructure are deployed equitably. Co-sponsors of the legislation include the California Alliance for Digital Equity, #OaklandUndivided, the California Community Foundation, NextGen California, and The Children’s Partnership, and is expected to earn the support of dozens of digital equity advocates across California.

“It is imperative that California does more to protect historically marginalized residents from internet service providers’ discriminatory practices and continued disinvestment in low-income and Black and brown neighborhoods,” said #Oakland Undivided Director Patrick Messac. “Mountains of data demonstrate that fast, affordable broadband is more accessible in high-income and predominantly white neighborhoods across the State. This legislation will make these discriminatory business practices a thing of the past.”

Added Maddie Ribble, Policy Director for Social Drivers of Health at The Children’s Partnership, “In today’s world, health equity absolutely depends on digital access. Yet, kids and families of color are too often on the wrong side of the digital divide, facing barriers to the health care, education, housing, and job opportunities that allow families to thrive. It is vital that the state adopt strong and enforceable antidiscrimination policy to ensure that California’s kids and families have equal access to these opportunities provided by fast, reliable, and affordable broadband, no matter where they live.”

Ana Ponce, Executive Director of GPSN, a non-profit with a mission to bring together the Los Angeles community to catalyze the transformation of the public education system so that students of color and students living in poverty gain the knowledge, skills, and experiences to lead thriving adult lives, applauded the legislation. “Los Angeles’ students and families need and deserve equitable access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet. It is impossible to participate and thrive in today’s economy and



society without it, so we are thrilled to stand with equity advocates across California in support of this important policy,” Ponce said.

GPSN is a co-convenor of the Digital Equity Los Angeles (DELA) coalition that championed the City of Los Angeles digital discrimination ordinance. Council Member Marqueece Harris-Dawson authored the motion. In an email announcing the motion’s passage, Council Member Harris-Dawson noted, “this work is in response to the California Community Foundation and Digital Equity LA Coalition report titled [Slower and More Expensive](#). The report highlighted price discrepancies in Los Angeles — where lower-income neighborhoods were charged more for broadband services than residents in wealthier neighborhoods. It’s so important for everyone to have broadband access for full participation in modern society and no one should be charged more based on their neighborhood. Thank you to my colleagues for their support and most of all the organizers in the Digital Equity LA Coalition. This is a big win and we’ll keep pushing equity on all fronts forward!”

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### About the [California Alliance for Digital Equity](#)

The [California Alliance for Digital Equity \(CADE\)](#) is a group of local and statewide advocates dedicated to advancing all forms of digital equity, from device acquisition to broadband access to digital literacy. We believe every Californian deserves access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet to navigate the digital world effectively. A fast connection without bandwidth or data limitations, coupled with technical support, is a civil right—not a luxury. CADE is currently comprised of twelve non-profit, academic, and philanthropic partners that work together to advance the alliance’s statewide priorities.

### About [Digital Equity LA](#)

[Digital Equity LA](#) is a coalition of community-based organizations working in Los Angeles communities delivering vital education, housing, immigration, health care, and civic engagement services, supporting Los Angeles’ vulnerable communities, and working together to advance digital equity as a necessary precondition to meet our core missions. The [CCF Digital Equity Initiative](#) provides financial and programmatic resources in support of Digital Equity LA.