

2025 Agenda for Sustainable Digital Equity Solutions



The path to close the gap to fast, reliable and affordable internet for all Californians

The Issue

Broadband is not a luxury, but a necessity to participate in today's economy, access vital public services, access education and economic development opportunities, and get life- and health-saving care.

Billions of public dollars have been invested to close the Digital Divide, but the gap between those who have access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet service and those who do not continues to leave hundreds of thousands of Californians from low income communities and communities of color behind.

To make those billions of dollars effective, policy change is urgently needed.

Our 2025 Policy Agenda

- **Expand and reform broadband regulations to provide fast, affordable, and reliable internet to all. Key regulatory focus areas include:**
 - Digital Discrimination Policy: Today there is no policy in California that protects residents from digital discrimination. We can solve this by updating California's Civil Rights Code to make digital discrimination against the law. Discrimination, intentional or unintentional, must not be allowed to continue to exacerbate the digital divide.
 - Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act (DIVCA): DIVCA is an outdated state policy that allows for limited oversight of the State's largest internet service providers' practices. We can quickly modernize the policy by bolstering its transparency and accountability requirements, as well as empowering the CPUC to serve as a watchdog.
 - The Classification of Broadband as a Public Utility: Today broadband is not a public utility as defined under The Public Utilities Act. By reclassifying broadband, the State could apply the same regulatory requirements imposed on traditional utilities on broadband service providers, thereby reducing inequities in affordability and access.
- **Establish long-missing measures to protect low-income broadband consumers and eliminate their financial burden. This can be done in a number of ways:**
 - Advancing statewide policies that improve broadband affordability. Internet connectivity remains out of reach for many low-income families. According to a recent US News survey, a Californians' average monthly internet bill is \$95. In a post-ACP world, the State must identify ways to ensure low-income residents have internet access.
 - Establishing consumer protections on broadband service providers' debt collection practices. We ought to ensure California's families and small businesses are not kicked offline due to pandemic-era debts.

Our 2025 Policy Agenda, cont'd

- Insist on better and more transparent data to ensure the State’s broadband dollars are being used wisely. We can do this by:
 - Requiring information from affected communities to be used in the state’s broadband maps. Today, California’s official broadband maps ignore the mountains of data collected on the ground in communities across the state by local education agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community advocates. Instead, the maps solely rely on limited, proprietary data collected from internet service providers. If the State truly wants a complete and accurate understanding of where broadband needs are, these practices must change.

Partnering with CADE

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.

CADE is prepared to advocate in support of bills that align with our 2025 agenda, and our partners are open to discussions regarding bill sponsorship. CADE’s recent advocacy includes:



- Sponsoring Assembly Bill 2239 (Bonta) which aimed to define and ban digital discrimination in California.
- Engaging with and providing feedback on many of California’s Broadband for All initiatives overseen by the California Department of Technology and the California Public Utilities Commission, including:
 - State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP)
 - Middle Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI)
 - Last Mile / Federal Funding Account (FFA)
 - Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)

