



We write to express our strong support of AB 41, the the Digital Equity in Video Franchising Act of 2023 (DEVFA), which advances long overdue reforms to the 2006 California franchise law, known as DIVCA.

AB41 addresses critical issues with equitable access to services offered by holders of state franchises, creates a transparent and fair process for once-a-decade franchise renewals, and establishes a mechanism for California customers to make the commission aware of service quality issues.

DIVCA was passed in 2006 to encourage competition in the cable market with the intent of benefiting consumers with lower prices, better services - video and broadband that is offered over the same wires - and expanded access to broadband. More than 15 years later, DIVCA has fallen well short of its promises:

- **Competition has decreased in the years since DIVCA went into effect.** Over the last decade the percentage of California households with access to two or more providers has plunged from 80% to 65%.
- **Prices for California cable service have increased since the advent of DIVCA,** in the case of at least one franchise holder by more than 150%.
- **Hundreds of thousands of families across California lack access to service, most of them within the service areas of state franchise holders.**

DIVCA's outdated anti-discrimination provisions and lack of equal access policy have led to a persistent and troubling gap in broadband connectivity across the state - responsible for a large part of what we refer to as the "digital divide." In fact, the gap in access between wealthy and low-income Californians has been largely unchanged over the past two decades.

The digital divide affects all kinds of California communities, rural, suburban, and urban alike. AB41 makes equal access the official policy of the states only franchising authority, and defines anti-discrimination in clear and actionable ways.

We the undersigned represent a broad and deep coalition of equity advocates working across the state and across issues. We are educators, health care providers, economic opportunity engines, community leaders, and above all, service providers and advocates for Californians that have too often been left behind. We have seen and experienced first-hand the urgent need to close the digital divide in our communities.

Together, we educate and advocate for fast, reliable, and affordable broadband for everyone, and we enthusiastically support AB 41.

We thank you for your leadership on this critical statewide issue.

Sincerely,

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