



## SB 4 (Gonzalez) The Broadband for All Act

### SUMMARY

---

Senate Bill 4 will secure continuous funding and implement a number of critically needed reforms to the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) program administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). These changes will help close the digital divide and meet the connectivity needs of Californians, both during this unprecedented pandemic and for decades to come.

### EXISTING LAW

---

The CASF provides grants to bridge the digital divide in unserved and underserved areas in the state. In 2017, AB 1665 (E. Garcia, Chapter 851, Statutes of 2017) authorized the CPUC to collect up to \$330 million through the 2022 calendar year to fund the CASF through a surcharge on certain phone customers. Out of the CPUC's six public purpose programs, CASF is the only one that does not receive continuous funding.

On August 14, 2020, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order No. 73-20, which directed various state agencies to collaboratively source solutions to address the digital divide and set a goal for deploying high-speed 100 megabits per second (mbps) internet and infrastructure.

### BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

---

The COVID-19 Pandemic has exacerbated the deeply entrenched digital-divide, which has left many lower income, Latino, African American, and rural communities without access to high-speed broadband services<sup>1</sup>. Whether it be children doing homework outside of fast food restaurants, or medically-fragile individuals who can't access services through tele-health care, the pandemic has shown a spotlight on the inequality in

access to broadband that has existed in our state for years. The implications of a continued long-term lack of access to telehealth services for at-risk populations, or the loss of critical education time for developing students, are massive and must be addressed.

Even before the COVID-19 Pandemic, over half of all internet traffic was data-rich video, requiring higher-capacity networks,<sup>2</sup> and in 2017, 31% of Californians, 12 million people, had no or insufficient broadband access.<sup>3</sup>

Given current circumstances, the need for fast high-quality internet and future-proof infrastructure has never been more immediate or severe. The existing CASF program has a goal of providing sufficient internet access to 98% of Californians. However, four major problems with the current CASF program prevent the fund from achieving its goal.

- (1) CASF grants can be used for projects that deploy internet at speeds as slow as 10/1 mbps, which are incapable of meeting average household demands.
- (2) Grant funds to build out broadband infrastructure are primarily reserved for areas that have internet at dial-up speeds or lower, leaving out many communities where Californians struggle with slightly faster but still obsolete connectivity.
- (3) Local governments are currently last in the queue to be considered for CASF funds, and many smaller and rural local governments with critical on-the-ground knowledge about their community's needs may not have the technical expertise to successfully obtain CASF grants.
- (4) The CASF program is funded through a small surcharge, which ends in 2022, leaving the CASF with insufficient funding to achieve its stated goals.

1. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-digital-divide/>  
2. Strain, Garrett, Samir Gambhir, and Eli Moore. "AT&T's Digital Divide in California." (2017).  
3. [http://www.internetforallnow.org/2017\\_uc\\_berkeley\\_igs\\_study\\_on\\_california\\_digital\\_divide](http://www.internetforallnow.org/2017_uc_berkeley_igs_study_on_california_digital_divide)

## **SOLUTION**

---

SB 4 will update the CASF by making communities eligible for grants based on their true internet need, promoting deployment of high-speed, 100mbps broadband, and making it easier for local governments to apply for grants and finance their own infrastructure.

Additionally, SB 4 recognizes that a long-term commitment is needed to develop future proof infrastructure, and extends the 2022 sunset for 10 more years on the CASF surcharge. SB 4 ensures oversight and transparency by requiring a biennial audit of the program, and caps the surcharge collection at \$150 million per year.

These programmatic and funding reforms are critical to bringing the CASF into the 21st century and finally investing in closing the digital divide in California once and for all.

## **SUPPORT**

---

Electronic Frontier Foundation (Co-Sponsor)  
Common Sense (Co-Sponsor)  
SSPI Tony Thurmond (Co-Sponsor)  
California Faculty Association (CFA – Co-Sponsor)  
SEIU (Co-Sponsor)  
Access Humboldt  
Access Now  
ACLU of California  
California Association of School Business Officials  
California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS  
California Center for Rural Policy  
California Community Foundation  
California Economic Summit  
California Forward  
California Health + Advocates  
California Partnership for San Joaquin Valley  
California School Boards Association (CSBA)  
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)  
California State PTA  
California Telehealth Policy Coalition (over 100 orgs.)  
California Workforce Association  
Canal Alliance  
Central Coast Broadband Consortium  
Central Valley Community Foundation  
City of Lakewood  
City of Long Beach  
City of Oakland  
City of Paramount

City of Signal Hill  
City of Thousand Oaks  
City of West Sacramento  
Coalition for COVID Recovery, Support and Prevention  
Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles  
Computer Science Teacher Association  
Consumer Action  
Consumer Reports  
Contextly  
Council for a Strong America  
County of Marin Board of Supervisors  
County of Monterey Board of Supervisors  
CUE  
Economic Development Collaborative  
Economic Vitality Corp.  
Eden Housing  
Edge Coalition  
Environmental Center for San Diego  
EveryoneOn  
Fight for the Future  
Founder Academy  
Fresno Business Council  
The Fresno Center  
Fresno State  
Georgetown Friends of the Library  
Great School Voices  
The Greenlining Institute  
IECF  
Imperial County Transportation Commission  
Indivisible Sacramento  
InnovateEDU  
Institute for Local Self-Reliance  
Khan Academy  
League of California Cities  
Livable California  
Long Beach Community College District  
Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Louisville Metro Office of Civic Innovation and Technology  
MakeKnowledge  
Mayor, City of Daly City  
Media Alliance  
MediaJustice  
mohuman  
New America's Open Technology Institute  
North Bay Leadership Council  
North Peninsula Democratic Club  
North State Planning & Development Collective  
OCHIN – CA. Telehealth Network  
Open Door Community Health Center  
Peninsula Young Democrats

Public Knowledge  
Reach  
Reddit, Inc.  
Rural County Representative of California (RCRC)  
San Diego County Office of Education  
San Joaquin Broadband Consortium  
San Joaquin Rural Development Center  
Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee  
Sierra Business Council  
Siskiyou Works  
Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)  
Stanislaus Community Foundation  
Tahoe Prosperity Center  
TechEquity Collaborative  
Tony Madrigal, Modesto City Councilmember, District 2  
Tucows  
Unite Los Angeles  
Valley Vision  
Voices for Progress  
Western Center on Law & Poverty  
Western Governors University  
Writers Guild of America West  
3CORE

**CONTACT**

---

George Soares, (209) 761-5132  
Senator Lena Gonzalez  
George Soares@sen.ca.gov

