

# NO HOME LEFT OFFLINE

July 17th, 2023

The Honorable Kat Ivey  
Governor of Alabama  
600 Dexter Avenue,  
Montgomery, AL 36130-2751

Dear Governor Ivey,

The undersigned organizations, write to you today as part of the No Home Left Offline Coalition, a coalition of national nonprofit organizations representing broadband, housing, healthcare, civil rights, municipalities, and education committed to advocating for the development, inclusion, and implementation of equitable policies that ensure that No Home is Left Offline.

Over 350,000 Alabama families currently rely on the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) for internet service. If Congress does not refund the ACP this year, those enrolled families will soon see a big spike in their internet bill and potentially lose service entirely. This would occur just as Alabama prepares to make the biggest broadband investment in state history.

On December 31, 2021, to comply with Congressional directives in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Federal Communications Commission launched the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a \$14.2 billion successor program to the Emergency Broadband Benefit which enabled nearly 9 million to afford home broadband during the pandemic. Since its inception, 351,832 Alabama families have signed up for and rely on the ACP to bring broadband to their homes.

The ACP was well-timed as an affordability solution: nationwide, two-thirds of the entire digital divide is due to affordability. In Alabama, this number is 64%. Put another way, for every 10 Alabamian families who do not have home internet, for 6 of them, it's just because they can't afford to connect and stay connected.

Unfortunately, we are approaching an alarming crossroads: funding for the ACP is projected to run out by mid-2024.<sup>1</sup> So far, no clear path has emerged to renew the funds. *We urge you to contact your congressional delegation to urge them to take action on renewing the ACP.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.benton.org/headlines/when-will-affordable-connectivity-program-funding-run-out-0>

If the ACP is not renewed:

- **351,832 Alabama families and 19 million families nationwide, will suddenly face an increased broadband bill.** An increase of up to \$30/month, or up to \$75/month in tribal areas, is simply not what these families need in the current environment of inflation and economic uncertainty. Simply put, whether homeowners or renters, these low-income Americans who utilize the ACP to access education, employment, or healthcare will be stripped of broadband access should the program cease.
- **The success of Alabama’s Broadband Access, Equity and Deployment (BEAD) allocation in connecting all Alabamans – an estimated \$1,401,221,901 – will be in question.** The BEAD plans states are required to submit to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) later this year rely heavily on the existence of the ACP. By statute, states have the directive to align their BEAD and Digital Equity Act (DEA) plans in order to receive the federal funds, and providing access to “a reliable, affordable, high-speed internet connection” is one of the key goals of the DEA.<sup>2</sup> The success and interdependence of both programs is absolutely critical to eradicating the digital divide, regardless of where someone calls home—whether that’s in unserved rural communities or unserved and underserved low-income multifamily communities where reliable and modern broadband infrastructure is often out of reach without government subsidy.
- **Internet Service Providers (ISPs) may face a considerable dropoff in subscribers.** ISPs are expected to bid on deployment projects funded by BEAD funds to build out networks to unserved and underserved communities. The ACP stretches BEAD dollars and draws infrastructure to the communities that need it most. Recent analysis shows the ACP may lead to a 25% reduction in the subsidy needed to incentivize deployment in rural areas.<sup>3</sup> If Congress fails to provide additional funding for the ACP, many regional providers may decide not to participate in state procurement opportunities because broadband will no longer be affordable to residents in those communities.
- **An entire ecosystem of community-based organizations with incredible momentum organizing around signing their communities up for ACP will come to a halt.** The past two years have seen a flourishing of community-based organizations working to help their communities afford broadband through ACP enrollment events, training, building out digital navigator corps, and other

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<sup>2</sup> H.R.3684 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. (2021, November 15). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684>

<sup>3</sup> See Figure 17, <https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2022-cs-bcg-closing-digital-divide-final-release-3-for-web.pdf#page=34>

outreach efforts. In fact, the Community Action Association of Alabama recently received \$250,000 federal funding to increase awareness and enrollment in the ACP, which would be proven ineffective if ACP funding ran out. It would be financially irresponsible and detrimental to communities to allow organizations to undertake these community initiatives without certainty that ACP will continue.

The No Home Left Offline Coalition and its undersigned members applaud you for your efforts to quickly and efficiently connect all of your state's residents to affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband. We cannot thank you enough for prioritizing both access and affordability to ensure your constituents can connect to the internet.<sup>4</sup> Voices like yours carry weight in Washington, D.C. Please tell Congress to take urgent action to renew the ACP for the 351,832 families and 18.5 million families nationwide relying on the ACP to complete homework, work remotely, access healthcare, and the social safety net.

Sincerely,

Benton Institute for Broadband & Society  
Columbus Metropolitan Library  
Common Sense Media  
Community Tech NY (CTNY)  
Connect2Educate, A Rural Broadband Advocacy  
Council for Affordable and Rural Housing  
County of Los Angeles Internal Services Department  
EducationSuperHighway  
IBSA, Inc.  
INCOMPAS  
Institute of Real Estate Management  
Kansas Office of Broadband Development  
Link Oregon (Oregon Fiber Partnership)  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)  
Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Maine Connectivity Authority  
Multicultural Media, Telecom, and Internet Council (MMTC)  
National Affordable Housing Management Association  
National Apartment Association  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Housing Cooperatives  
National Multifamily Housing Council  
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition

SmartWAVE Technologies

Sonic

Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF)

The Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA)

US Ignite

Volunteers of America National Services

Westchester Library System

Zayo Group, LLC