

(3) Resolution Bridge the Digital Divide during COVID-19 by Implementing an Emergency Broadband Benefit

Sponsored by Mayor McKinley L. Price, DDS (Newport News, VA)

WHEREAS, access to affordable, reliable broadband internet is critical for residents of urban and rural areas throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 it has been reported by [PEW Research Center](#) that 90% of Americans use the internet; and

WHEREAS, the proportion of American adults with high-speed broadband service at home increased rapidly and as of [June 2019, 95% of the US population has access to fixed broadband with speeds of at least 25/3 Mbps and 91% has access to speeds of at least 100/10 Mbps](#); and

WHEREAS, broadband is critical for educating youth, providing telehealth, accessing jobs, and connecting with each other in the 21st century, and COVID-19 has increased the importance of internet connectivity; and

WHEREAS, despite the availability of broadband a digital divide still remains, with data from the U.S. Census Bureau's [American Community Survey](#) (ACS), the [FCC](#), and [Pew](#) showing that only about 73% of U.S. households subscribe to a fixed broadband connection, thereby leaving them without home broadband access during the pandemic, where the need is critical; and

WHEREAS, due to the pandemic many schools are struggling to offer virtual distance learning to youth in low income urban and rural communities because economic hardships compounded by the pandemic have made broadband unaffordable for some families and individuals; and

WHEREAS, some rural communities lack any access to high speed broadband due to the high cost of broadband deployment in certain areas, among many other factors; and

WHEREAS, broadband deployment and adoption are two distinct issues; and

WHEREAS, broadband deployment is primarily a rural challenge and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Congress are taking, and are expected to take, some important steps to address this deployment issue by helping to fund the deployment to unserved areas and to remove regulatory and market-based impediments to deployment in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, it is important for there to be a focus on how to further improve broadband adoption; particularly in low income communities; and

WHEREAS, cost as a barrier is not unique to broadband, and the government has a track record of supporting low income Americans, examples include food, housing, and education; and

WHEREAS, with the onset of COVID-19, the urgency has increased for the government to step up and help make broadband more affordable for low-income families; and

WHEREAS, the FCC and other federal agencies have used funding from the CARES Act and other recently enacted coronavirus relief bills to help support broadband affordability and deployment; and

WHEREAS, the cooperation of national, state and local government with the private sector to facilitate investment in broadband infrastructure and adoption will positively impact the longevity of communities; including but not limited to youth staying in and returning to the community, improving opportunities for local businesses, expanding the market potential to attract new businesses, expanding educational opportunities, expanding telehealth options and innovation, improving real estate values, expanding and elevating civic participation, expanding resources for elderly populations to age in place, expanding public safety applications and other municipal services and innovation, and improving overall quality of life for residents.

BE IT RESOLVED, the African American Mayors Association (AAMA) urges the United States Congress and the President to include an emergency broadband benefit for low income Americans in the next round of stimulus; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, AAMA calls on the FCC, Congress, and the President to create a permanent broadband subsidy for low income Americans funded through appropriations.