



General Assembly

January Session, 2025

Committee Bill No. 514

LCO No. 4595



Referred to Committee on GENERAL LAW

Introduced by:
(GL)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NET EQUALITY PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section:
- 2 (1) "Affordable broadband Internet access service" means broadband
3 Internet access service that (A) costs not more than the amount
4 established in subsection (c) of this section, and (B) meets the minimum
5 speed requirements set forth in subsection (d) of this section;
- 6 (2) "Broadband Internet access service" (A) means a mass-market
7 retail service that, by wire or radio, provides the capability to transmit
8 data to, and receive data from, all or substantially all Internet endpoints,
9 including, but not limited to, any capability that is incidental to, and
10 enables the operation of, such service, (B) includes any service that is
11 provided to customers in this state and is functionally equivalent to the
12 service described in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision, and (C)
13 excludes dial-up Internet access service;
- 14 (3) "Broadband Internet access service provider" means any person
15 who provides broadband Internet access service in this state;

16 (4) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Consumer
17 Protection;

18 (5) "Department" means the Department of Consumer Protection;

19 (6) "Eligible household" means (A) a resident of a group home or
20 congregate care facility that (i) is participating in a qualified public
21 assistance program, and (ii) is located within a qualified broadband
22 Internet access service provider's service territory in this state, and (B) a
23 household (i) in which at least one resident is participating in a qualified
24 public assistance program, and (ii) that is located within a qualified
25 broadband Internet access service provider's service territory in this
26 state;

27 (7) "Person" means an individual, corporation, business trust, estate
28 trust, partnership, association, joint venture or any other legal or
29 commercial entity;

30 (8) "Qualified broadband Internet access service provider" means a
31 broadband Internet access service provider that is doing business in this
32 state and with any state agency, including, but not limited to, through a
33 procurement contract;

34 (9) "Qualified public assistance program" means (A) the Connecticut
35 energy assistance program administered by the Department of Social
36 Services pursuant to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of
37 1981, as amended from time to time, (B) the National School Lunch
38 Program established pursuant to the National School Lunch Act, 42 USC
39 1751 et seq., as amended from time to time, (C) the temporary assistance
40 for needy families program administered by the Department of Social
41 Services pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
42 Reconciliation Act of 1996, as amended from time to time, (D) the
43 supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the
44 Department of Social Services pursuant to the Food and Nutrition Act
45 of 2008, as amended from time to time, (E) the Covered Connecticut
46 program established under section 19a-754c of the general statutes, (F)

47 HUSKY Health, as defined in section 17b-290 of the general statutes, (G)
48 the state supplement program to the federal Supplemental Security
49 Income Program administered by the Department of Social Services
50 pursuant to the Social Security Act, as amended from time to time, and
51 (H) any program providing need-based financial aid for post-secondary
52 education; and

53 (10) "State agency" has the same meaning as provided in section 1-79
54 of the general statutes.

55 (b) The Department of Consumer Protection shall develop, establish
56 and administer a program that shall be known as the "Net Equality
57 Program" for the purposes set forth in this section. As part of said
58 program:

59 (1) The department shall monitor progress toward achieving the
60 objectives set forth in subparagraph (C)(i) of subdivision (2) of this
61 subsection; and

62 (2) Each qualified broadband Internet access service provider shall:

63 (A) Beginning on October 1, 2025, allow any resident or household
64 described in subdivision (6) of subsection (a) of this section, during any
65 month in which such resident or household qualifies as an eligible
66 household, to immediately convert to affordable broadband Internet
67 access service provided by such qualified broadband Internet access
68 service provider;

69 (B) Not later than October 1, 2025, establish and maintain a telephone
70 number at which members of eligible households may contact trained
71 personnel to sign up for affordable broadband Internet access service
72 during the thirty-minute period immediately following the beginning
73 of a telephone call made to such telephone number;

74 (C) Not later than December 31, 2025, and annually thereafter, hold a
75 public meeting with key stakeholders to (i) ensure that (I) at least ninety
76 per cent of eligible households receive affordable broadband Internet

77 access service not later than January 1, 2026, and (II) at least ninety-five
78 per cent of eligible households receive affordable broadband Internet
79 access service not later than January 1, 2029, and (ii) explore options to
80 establish and advance strategic and effective public-private
81 partnerships;

82 (D) Not later than April 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, submit to
83 the department, in a form and manner prescribed by the commissioner,
84 a report disclosing (i) the number of eligible households that signed up
85 for affordable broadband Internet access service provided by such
86 qualified broadband Internet access service provider during the year
87 that is the subject of the report, and (ii) the total number of eligible
88 households that received affordable broadband Internet access service
89 provided by such qualified broadband Internet access service provider
90 during the year that is the subject of such report; and

91 (E) (i) Beginning on October 1, 2025, advertise, in print and online, in
92 multiple languages and by placing advertisements with public and
93 nongovernmental organizations, the availability of (I) the affordable
94 broadband Internet access service provided by such qualified
95 broadband Internet access service provider in this state, and (II) the
96 "Affordable Connectivity Program" developed and implemented by the
97 Federal Communications Commission or an equivalent program
98 offered by said commission.

99 (ii) Each advertisement required under subparagraph (E)(i) of this
100 subdivision shall include the telephone number established and
101 maintained pursuant to subparagraph (B) of this subdivision.

102 (iii) Notwithstanding the provisions of subparagraph (E)(i) of this
103 subdivision, a qualified broadband Internet access service provider may
104 cease all advertisements required under said subparagraph if a
105 reputable state-wide survey demonstrates that (I) at least eighty per cent
106 of eligible households are aware that affordable broadband Internet
107 access service is available, or (II) at least ninety-five per cent of eligible
108 households are connected to the Internet at home.

109 (c) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, the
110 monthly cost charged by a qualified broadband Internet access service
111 provider to an eligible household for affordable broadband Internet
112 access service provided pursuant to this section shall not exceed forty
113 dollars.

114 (2) Not later than June 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the
115 Commissioner of Consumer Protection shall adjust the maximum
116 monthly cost that a qualified broadband Internet access service provider
117 may charge to an eligible household for affordable broadband Internet
118 access service provided pursuant to this section during the twelve-
119 month period beginning on July first of the same calendar year in
120 accordance with any change in the consumer price index for all urban
121 consumers for the preceding calendar year, as published by the United
122 States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

123 (d) (1) Except as provided in subdivisions (2) and (3) of this
124 subsection, all affordable broadband Internet access service provided
125 pursuant to this section shall provide:

126 (A) Speeds that are at least as fast as (i) twenty-five megabits per
127 second downstream, and (ii) three megabits per second upstream; and

128 (B) Speeds and latencies that are sufficient to support distance
129 learning and telehealth services.

130 (2) Beginning on June 1, 2027, and not more frequently than
131 biennially thereafter, the Commissioner of Consumer Protection may, in
132 consultation with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, increase the
133 minimum speeds set forth in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (1) of this
134 subsection for the two-year period beginning on July first of the same
135 calendar year. The Commissioner of Consumer Protection and the
136 Public Utilities Regulatory Authority shall post such increased speeds
137 on the Department of Consumer Protection's and Public Utilities
138 Regulatory Authority's Internet web sites.

139 (3) The Commissioner of Consumer Protection may authorize a
140 deviation from the requirements established in this subsection for the
141 purpose of complying with applicable state or federal law, except the
142 commissioner shall not authorize any deviation from such requirements
143 to allow any affordable broadband Internet access service provided
144 pursuant to this section to provide speeds that are slower than the
145 speeds set forth in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (1) of this subsection
146 or established by the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, in
147 consultation with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, pursuant to
148 subdivision (2) of this subsection, whichever speeds are higher.

149 (e) (1) Beginning on October 1, 2025, and except as provided in
150 subdivision (2) of this subsection, no state agency shall do business, or
151 enter into any procurement contract, with any broadband Internet
152 access service provider that is doing business in this state unless such
153 broadband Internet access service provider offers affordable broadband
154 Internet access service to eligible households as required under this
155 section.

156 (2) The provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall not be
157 construed to impair any contract that is in existence on October 1, 2025.

158 (f) The provisions of subsections (a) to (e), inclusive, of this section
159 shall not be construed to apply to the Department of Emergency
160 Services and Public Protection.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2025	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To require certain broadband Internet access service providers to provide affordable broadband Internet access service.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]

Co-Sponsors: SEN. DUFF, 25th Dist.

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