



General Assembly

Amendment

January Session, 2025

LCO No. 8971



Offered by:

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To: Subst. Senate Bill No. 514

File No. 571

Cal. No. 314

"AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NET EQUALITY PROGRAM."

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the
2 following in lieu thereof:

3 "Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) As used in this section:

4 (1) "Affordable broadband Internet access service" means broadband
5 Internet access service that (A) costs not more than the amount
6 established in subsection (g) of this section, and (B) meets the minimum
7 speed requirements set forth in subsection (h) of this section;

8 (2) "Broadband Internet access service" has the same meaning as
9 provided in section 16-330a of the general statutes;

10 (3) "Broadband Internet access service provider" has the same
11 meaning as provided in section 16-330a of the general statutes;

12 (4) "Eligible household" means a household (A) in which at least one

13 resident is an eligible individual, and (B) that is located within a
14 qualified broadband Internet access service provider's service territory
15 in this state;

16 (5) "Eligible individual" means an individual who is enrolled in a
17 qualified public assistance program;

18 (6) "Person" means an individual, corporation, business trust, estate
19 trust, partnership, association, joint venture or any other legal or
20 commercial entity;

21 (7) "Qualified broadband Internet access service provider" means a
22 broadband Internet access service provider that is doing business in this
23 state and with any state agency, including, but not limited to, through a
24 procurement contract;

25 (8) "Qualified public assistance program" means (A) the
26 supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the
27 Department of Social Services pursuant to the Food and Nutrition Act
28 of 2008, as amended from time to time, and (B) any public assistance
29 program recognized by a qualified broadband Internet access service
30 provider for the purpose of determining eligibility for the qualified
31 broadband Internet access service provider's existing low-income
32 broadband Internet access service program; and

33 (9) "State agency" has the same meaning as provided in section 1-79
34 of the general statutes, but does not include the Department of
35 Emergency Services and Public Protection.

36 (b) Not later than September 30, 2026, the Commissioner of Energy
37 and Environmental Protection shall, for the purposes set forth in this
38 section, develop, establish and administer a program that shall be
39 known as the "Net Equality Program".

40 (c) As part of the program established pursuant to subsection (b) of
41 this section, and beginning on October 1, 2026, each qualified broadband
42 Internet access service provider shall allow any individual who resides

43 in an eligible household that is located within such qualified broadband
44 Internet access service provider's service territory in this state to submit
45 to such qualified broadband Internet access service provider a request
46 to subscribe to affordable broadband Internet access service provided
47 by such qualified broadband Internet access service provider.

48 (d) On and after October 1, 2026, each qualified broadband Internet
49 access service provider shall make a commercially reasonable effort to
50 raise public awareness regarding the availability of the affordable
51 broadband Internet access service such qualified broadband Internet
52 access service provider offers to eligible households located within such
53 qualified broadband Internet access service provider's service territory
54 in this state. Such effort shall include, but need not be limited to:

55 (1) Posting the enrollment procedures for such qualified broadband
56 Internet access service in a prominent and publicly accessible location
57 on such qualified broadband Internet access service provider's Internet
58 web site; and

59 (2) Including the enrollment procedures for such qualified
60 broadband Internet access service in any written and commercial
61 advertisement developed to inform individuals residing in eligible
62 households located within such qualified broadband Internet access
63 service provider's service territory in this state regarding such qualified
64 broadband Internet access service.

65 (e) Not later than February 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, each
66 qualified broadband Internet access service provider shall submit to the
67 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, in a form and
68 manner prescribed by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental
69 Protection, a report disclosing:

70 (1) The number of eligible households that signed up for affordable
71 broadband Internet access service provided by such qualified
72 broadband Internet access service provider during the year that is the
73 subject of the report; and

74 (2) The total number of eligible households that received affordable
75 broadband Internet access service provided by such qualified
76 broadband Internet access service provider during the year that is the
77 subject of such report.

78 (f) As part of the program established pursuant to subsection (b) of
79 this section, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
80 shall explore options to establish and advance strategic and effective
81 public-private partnerships.

82 (g) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, the
83 monthly cost, including all taxes, charges and fees, charged by a
84 qualified broadband Internet access service provider to an eligible
85 household for affordable broadband Internet access service provided
86 pursuant to this section, including all equipment associated with such
87 affordable broadband Internet access service, shall not exceed forty
88 dollars.

89 (2) Not later than June 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the
90 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall adjust the
91 maximum monthly cost that a qualified broadband Internet access
92 service provider may charge to an eligible household for affordable
93 broadband Internet access service provided pursuant to this section
94 during the twelve-month period beginning on July first of the same
95 calendar year in accordance with any change in the consumer price
96 index for the preceding calendar year, as published by the United States
97 Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

98 (h) (1) Except as provided in subdivisions (2) and (3) of this
99 subsection, all affordable broadband Internet access service provided
100 pursuant to this section shall:

101 (A) During the period beginning October 1, 2026, and ending
102 September 30, 2027, provide speeds that are at least as fast as (i) one
103 hundred megabits per second downstream, and (ii) five megabits per
104 second upstream;

105 (B) On and after October 1, 2027, provide speeds that are at least as
106 fast as (i) one hundred megabits per second downstream, and (ii) twenty
107 megabits per second upstream; and

108 (C) Speeds and latencies that are sufficient to support distance
109 learning and telehealth services.

110 (2) Beginning on June 1, 2030, and not more frequently than
111 biennially thereafter, the Department of Energy and Environmental
112 Protection may, in consultation with the department's Bureau of Energy
113 and Technology and the Commission for Educational Technology,
114 increase the minimum speeds set forth in subparagraph (B) of
115 subdivision (1) of this subsection for the two-year period beginning on
116 July first of the same calendar year. The department, bureau and
117 commission shall post such increased speeds on the department's,
118 bureau's and commission's Internet web sites.

119 (3) The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection may
120 authorize a deviation from the requirements established in this
121 subsection for the purpose of complying with applicable state or federal
122 law, except the department shall not authorize any deviation from such
123 requirements to allow any affordable broadband Internet access service
124 provided pursuant to this section to provide speeds that are slower than
125 the speeds set forth in subparagraph (A) or (B) of subdivision (1) of this
126 subsection or established by the department, in consultation with the
127 department's Bureau of Energy and Technology and the Commission
128 for Educational Technology, pursuant to subdivision (2) of this
129 subsection, whichever speeds are faster.

130 (i) Beginning on January 31, 2027, any state agency proposing to enter
131 into a contract for the purchase of broadband Internet access service
132 shall, all other factors being equal, give preference to a qualified
133 broadband Internet access service provider that offers affordable
134 broadband Internet access service to eligible households pursuant to
135 this section.

136 (j) The provisions of subsections (a) to (i), inclusive, of this section
137 shall not be construed to impair any contract that is in existence on
138 October 1, 2026."

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