

ALA American Library Association

Public Policy and Advocacy Office 1615 New Hampshire Ave. NW Washington, DC 20009

Dear Honorable Senator,

On behalf of America's 117,000 libraries and the communities they serve, the American Library Association writes in support of the broadband provisions included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Specifically, we are pleased to see the inclusion of the Digital Equity Act alongside the broadband deployment and affordability provisions. The desperate need to connect is constantly visible to our members, as the library is often the first and most reliable place individuals turn to for accessing both the internet, and the ongoing digital skills training needed to keep pace with emergent online technologies. We also applaud the legislation's recognition that libraries and other anchor institutions require access to gigabit service. We urge you to move swiftly to pass this critical legislation, ensuring that libraries and other anchor institutions are guaranteed future-proof gigabit broadband service, and to keep members of the community connected with access to affordable broadband and the skills to use it.

Since the dial-up days, libraries across the country have stood in the digital gaps to connect our communities, especially for those most vulnerable. While prioritizing unserved areas followed by underserved areas is sensible, **anchor institutions should be served at the same time as residential consumers.** Broadband networks are most efficient when they are deployed to serve the entire community rather than only serving a subset of potential customers.

The Digital Equity Act provisions included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will help libraries continue to provide these critical services, and ensure that the investment in affordable broadband programs can facilitate a long-term impact on closing the digital divide. Even as individuals have access to internet at home, libraries recognize the need for ongoing support, especially for groups new to the internet or those with additional challenges to feeling confident online, including those from low-income households, older adults and English language learners.

Emergency recovery funding has been instrumental in boosting universal broadband access and digital equity, but a long-term strategy is required now. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's broadband title is a timely step in the right direction. Its comprehensive approach must continue to address all broadband deployment and adoption obstacles—availability, affordability, adequacy, lack of competition, and digital skills gaps. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act must not be delayed in moving forward.

Thank you for your commitment to closing the digital divide by ensuring libraries and other anchor institutions are equipped with the necessary resources to connect ALL of our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan S. Inouye". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Alan S. Inouye
Senior Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
American Library Association