



September 14, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 4 (Gonzalez) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I respectfully request your signature on Senate Bill 4. SB 4, authored by Senator Lena Gonzalez, would modernize and increase flexibility in utilizing the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF). RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

Broadband deployment has historically been challenging in rural areas due to difficult terrain and increased build costs. Additionally, antiquated CASF infrastructure funding rules have further stymied efforts by local governments and private/public partnerships to increase internet access in underserved and unserved communities throughout the state. SB 4 builds on the changes made during the State Budget process to state broadband funding, CASF program utility, and connectivity goals.

Specifically, RCRC supports increasing the maximum sum the California Public Utilities Commission may collect to \$150 million annually as CASF is the only dedicated and ongoing funding source to bridge the digital divide. Additionally, SB 4 permits greater flexibility in funding state internet access priorities, making CASF funding fungible within the account, allowing policymakers to direct funding to any of CASF subaccounts based on need, such as public housing or adoption. Lastly, SB 4 allows CASF funding to be utilized for construction of broadband infrastructure for unserved nonresidential facilities used for emergency response, such as county fairgrounds. Oftentimes during wildfires, county fairgrounds serve as the central location in communities for not only local emergency response, but as state command centers.

Students, families, workers, first responders, healthcare providers, and businesses need access to high-speed broadband to fully participate in the 21st century. It is a service as essential as water and electricity making it more critical than ever to rethink

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the status quo and invest in long term solutions that will address the multiple emergencies facing our state. Millions of California families in our cities and rural communities need these investments to secure access to education, healthcare, jobs, and government services.

Again, RCRC respectfully requests your signature on SB 4.

Sincerely,



TRACY RHINE
Senior Legislative Advocate

cc: The Honorable Lena Gonzalez, Member of the State Senate