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May 4, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: SB 28 (Caballero) – Rural Broadband and Digital Infrastructure Video Competition Reform Act of 2021.
SUPPORT – As Amended April 21, 2021
Set for Hearing – May 10, 2021 – Senate Appropriations Committee

Dear Senator Portantino:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), representing all 58 counties in the state, I am pleased to support SB 28, by Senator Caballero, which would require the state to identify resources that can aid broadband deployment and would reform the Digital Infrastructure Video Competition Act of 2006 (DIVCA).

Inequitable access to broadband is a longstanding issue, but the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on students, workers, small businesses, and everyday life has highlighted just how severe and urgent the disparity is. Rural parts of the state, low-density areas, and communities with lower-income residents are the least likely to have access to broadband.

SB 28 would help close the Digital Divide in two ways. First, it would have the state identify resources, such as suitable property, easements, and even spare state-owned conduit, that can aid in deployment. This issue is identified by the California Broadband Council in its Broadband For All Action Plan, which CSAC supports in its entirety.

Secondly, the bill would make important reforms to DIVCA, which was implemented fifteen years ago and has not been substantively reexamined since, despite changes in technology and business models. Under its terms, cable and telecommunication providers have been able to decide for themselves which services to provide in different areas, even with a single local jurisdiction, instead of negotiating with counties and cities over terms of service that would fit their communities' needs.

As a result, some areas—often those that are already disadvantaged—are left out of broadband service, cutting them off from the job opportunities, business opportunities, telehealth, and even elementary education that requires connection. SB 28 would fix this by returning local agencies to a seat at the table in the case of a company that is unwilling to meet thresholds for expanding services to rural, unserved, and underserved households.

For these reasons, CSAC supports SB 28 and encourages your “aye” vote when it comes before you. Should you have any questions, please contact me at gneill@counties.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Geoff Neill
Legislative Representative

Cc: Members and Consultants, Senate Appropriations Committee
Honorable Anna Caballero, California State Senate