

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Alan Davidson  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and Administrator  
National Telecommunications and Information Administration  
Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

**Re: Request for Comment on Broadband Programs in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Docket No. NTIA-2021-0002**

Dear Assistant Secretary Davidson,

As faith leaders deeply committed to creating an equitable and prosperous future in our communities, we urge you to move quickly on providing access to broadband services to those who need it most. One of our most important roles is to ensure that our parishioners have access to necessary health and educational resources so that they can live rich and full lives. However, we are concerned that for far too long, unequitable and unaffordable access to broadband services has created insurmountable obstacles in the daily lives of so many individuals in our home states.

Further emphasized by the COVID-19 pandemic, internet access has become central to our ability to access essential resources such as remote work, school, and telehealth services. However, for many in our communities, just getting online is a difficult task.

This is the reality for [Amber Kuehne](#), a 32-year-old single mom taking online classes at Spokane Community College in Washington State, who was forced to regularly drive to a community center in a nearby town to complete her online schoolwork. The hurdles didn't end there. Many times, Amber was unable to finish her exams and homework after being disconnected from the internet. Connection issues and having to commute in order to use a computer, piled on top of managing school with a full-time job, forced Amber to drop out of the administrative office management program she hoped would put her on a successful career path.

This is a story told too often: without the ability to connect online, too many people can't access proper healthcare services, employment resources, and schooling, placing them in situations which have irreversible consequences on their lives and the lives of their families. A recent study by Broadband Now found that close to [42 million](#) individuals across the United States lack access to affordable, reliable broadband, and we are here to make the case for fixing this.

As pastors, we've seen our parishioners, who already faced higher mortality rates and higher rates of unemployment since the pandemic, see an exponential increase of these rates over the past two years, which is unfair and unsustainable. Our communities need access to affordable and equitable broadband services as soon as possible, and we believe that your timely action to ensure this must be a priority.

As the NTIA begins distributing \$42 billion in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's funding for broadband services to communities, we urge lawmakers to do so in a way that gives everyone the best chance to succeed. This means a rapid, cost-effective, and tech-neutral deployment that provides our neighbors, friends, and families with access to the technologies that are essential to their daily lives, regardless of the infrastructure and economic circumstances that surround them.

We believe that the location, economic status, or infrastructure in our communities should not determine whether individuals have access to healthcare services, remote work, or, in Amber Kuehne's case, education. We urge you to ensure that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) distribution of broadband deployment funding is done in an affordable, rapid, and equitable manner to ensure this essential technology is available to everyone.

Sincerely,

The Progressive National Baptist Convention  
The National Baptist Convention of America

cc: Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC)  
Congressional Black Caucus (CBC)  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC)  
Congressional Native American Caucus