

Call on Congress to renew and extend the Affordable Connectivity Program funding in 2024 to ensure currently enrolled low-income households in Portland can continue to have access to affordable high-speed internet

WHEREAS, quality and affordable broadband has become an essential service, and access to high-speed internet is a necessity for almost every Portlander, connecting people to educational opportunities, telemedicine, and opportunities for work and entrepreneurship; and

WHEREAS, the City of Portland believes that all residents of Portland and Multnomah County should have barrier-free access to high-speed broadband internet at home and school, an affordable computing device, and the training to use them effectively; and

WHEREAS, the Affordable Connectivity Program is an FCC benefit program that helps ensure eligible households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more, consistent with Portland's digital equity goals; and

WHEREAS, the Affordable Connectivity Program has been a key tool in efforts to eliminate the digital divide in America since it was created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2021, serving as a long-term replacement for the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which connected families during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Affordable Connectivity Program is an essential program that over 23 million families rely on to access quality and affordable high-speed internet, including the 36,500 households in Portland; and

WHEREAS, under the Affordable Connectivity Program, eligible households can receive up to \$30 per month in discounts toward internet services; and

WHEREAS, eligible households may also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers; and

WHEREAS, Oregon has received \$115,758, 704 in funding from the Affordable Connectivity Program as of February 2024, saving Oregon families approximately \$6.6 million total each month; and

WHEREAS, eligible households are at risk of losing affordable internet service in 2024 if Congress does not fund an extension of the program; and

WHEREAS, the Affordable Connectivity Program stopped accepting new applications and enrollments on February 8; and

WHEREAS, barring additional funding from Congress, April is expected to be the last month enrolled households will receive the full benefit; and

WHEREAS, the City of Portland appreciates the strong bipartisan support of Oregon's Congressional delegation for continuing to fund the Affordable Connectivity Program; and

WHEREAS, extending the Affordable Connectivity Program will help close the digital divide, allow Americans to access the resources they need, and strengthen the U.S. economy to compete in the 21st Century.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Portland City Council calls on Congress to renew and extend the Affordable Connectivity Program funding in 2024 with existing or expanded eligibility criteria to ensure all eligible low-income households in Portland can continue to have access to affordable high-speed internet and receive the support they need to participate in the digital marketplace.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of Government Relations is hereby directed to transmit copies of this Resolution to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State of Oregon.