

NAACP

California Hawaii

STATE CONFERENCE

Rick L. Callender, Esq.
President

August 21, 2023

Reverend Jethroe Moore II
1st Vice President

Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Zephaniah Smith-Eisenstat
2nd Vice President

RE: Prioritize Equity by Delaying Middle Mile Leases for 60 Days

Naomi Rainey Pierson
3rd Vice President

Dear Governor Gavin Newsom,

LaJuana Bivens
Secretary/State Director

I am writing to express my concern for the deeply flawed process employed by the State to allocate the government's investment in broadband infrastructure, which threatens to perpetuate divestment in historically Black neighborhoods throughout the state.

Ida M. Johnson
Assistant Secretary

Olivia Verrett
2nd Assistant Secretary

First, I want to first appreciate the generational investment in broadband infrastructure by your office and the state legislature with SB 156 (Chapter 112, Statutes of 2021). With these potentially transformative investments, we have the opportunity to achieve Broadband for ALL and ensure that affordable, high-speed internet access is a reality for everyone. However, the California Department of Technology's ("CDT") reliance on demonstrably inaccurate State Broadband Maps have prevented the equitable delivery of this investment and subsequent opportunities to underserved communities. While only 17% of the statewide network is planned to be cut due to inflation, Oakland's proposed network was slashed by approximately 56% and South Central Los Angeles' by 77%. This totals a \$28 million divestment in public dollars from two of the least connected areas of the state.

Carolyn Veal-Hunter
Treasurer

Satia Austin
Area Director - Southeast

Darrell Goode
Area Director - Southwest

Therefore, I formally request you order the California Department of Technology take the following actions:

Delois Richards
Area Director - Coastal

Dave Smith
Area Director - North

Regina Smith
Area Director - Central

Freddye Davis
Area Director - West

Alice A. Huffman, PhD
President Emeritus

- 1. Delay the signing of middle mile leases by at least 60 days:** For nearly two years, impacted residents in historically redlined communities in both and South Central Los Angeles engaged with the State to actualize their initial projects that could connect tens of thousands of Black Californians. Despite months of assurances and without any advance notice, Oakland CDT shockingly announced in July of 2023 that they plan to divest tens of millions of dollars from both projects. Now, just 2 weeks later, CDT is trying to make these decisions permanent by rushing to sign 20 to 30 year leases that would further entrench structural racism.
- 2. Audit the State Broadband Maps for accuracy with particular attention to unserved locations in census tracts above the state median income:** The State must verify that reportedly unserved locations are actually unserved. On July 26, advocates from Oakland [provided testimony](#) at the California Broadband Council Meeting that 18 clusters labeled unserved in the wealthiest communities in Alameda County are demonstrably served. This should not have been a surprise, as the California Public Utilities Commission's [own research](#) has concluded that ISPs prioritize investment in

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California's highest income communities. Concerningly, the dense clusters of reported need in California's wealthiest, most connected communities remain on the map throughout the state. These are the communities that CDT must audit for accuracy to prevent perpetuating divestment in low-income Black and brown communities statewide. To plow forward with these discriminatory maps would place an unrealistic burden on the most disconnected, disadvantaged communities to challenge the data. This abdicates the State of their responsibility to correct the clear, pervasive structural issues in the State Broadband Maps.

We understand and appreciate that CDT is working on a stringent timeline in order to ensure that this resource can be utilized as soon as possible. However, concerns have been raised by NAACP chapters across the state that this short timeline was purposefully designed to limit participation from communities. While we believe this was not the intention, this perspective of communities is the unintended consequence of such short timelines coupled with limited access to map details.

Constituents have alerted me that leases on the middle-mile network could be signed this week, so an urgent reply is requested. **Please respond to this letter by Wednesday, August 23, with confirmation that your office will (1) delay the signing of middle mile leases by at least 60 days, and (2) audit the State Broadband Maps for accuracy.**

Sincerely,



Rick L. Callender, ESQ
President, CA State Conference NAACP

cc: President Reynolds
Commissioner Shiroma
Commissioner Houck
Commissioner Reynolds
Commissioner Douglas