

Study Resolution

Access to Broadband across the Commonwealth

Authorized by the Commission on November 13, 2023

WHEREAS, broadband is not universally available in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Virginia has so far received approximately \$700 million in federal funds and has appropriated approximately \$200 million in state general funds for expanding broadband access; and

WHEREAS, Virginia is expected to receive another \$1.48 billion in federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funds, as long the state meets specified federal milestones, which will be deployed for broadband efforts over the next few years; and

WHEREAS, the state's broadband efforts are led by the Department of Housing and Community Development and involve coordination of numerous state-level entities, localities, utilities, and broadband providers; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has established a goal of extending affordable and reliable broadband to parts of the Commonwealth that do not have it by 2028 now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the state's efforts to expand access to affordable and reliable broadband throughout the Commonwealth. In conducting its study staff shall (i) evaluate whether broadband funds have been deployed effectively through state programs such as the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Program and Line Extension Customer Assistance Program; (ii) identify federal broadband programs available to Virginia and determine whether Virginia has taken full advantage of them; (iii) evaluate whether the state has sufficient staff and effective procedures in place to distribute forthcoming federal funds; (iv) evaluate whether the state has sufficient authority and expertise to monitor broadband deployment projects, facilitate collaboration among key broadband stakeholders, and assist stakeholders with overcoming obstacles to projects' success; (v) assess whether the state is on track to achieve its universal connectivity goals, identify obstacles that may impede the achievement of these goals, and propose state government actions to overcome these obstacles; and (vi) evaluate the state's role in helping ensure access to and the affordability of broadband in the future. JLARC may make recommendations as necessary and may review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Broadband Advisory Committee shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to its statutory authority.