



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF BROADBAND
JB Pritzker, Governor

December 30, 2020

Honorable Members of the Illinois General Assembly:

In June 2020, SB 2135 directed the Illinois Broadband Advisory Council (BAC) to study various questions related to broadband access and affordability, including cost estimates for:

- Universal broadband access where existing broadband infrastructure is insufficient,
- Universal free or affordable broadband access for all residents, and
- Free or affordable broadband access for those in poverty.

To provide thorough analysis, the BAC worked with respected researchers to respond to the questions in SB 2135. The resulting study, which incorporates our initial input and feedback, accompanies this letter.

The study bolsters the case for the broadband expansion and digital equity initiatives launched by Governor JB Pritzker while making clear the need for a bigger federal investment in broadband. Importantly, the study confirms that the \$400 million devoted to Connect Illinois grants is within the estimated range of what is needed to ensure universal broadband access throughout the state. Moreover, the study identifies gaps in equitable access to computers and broadband that the Pritzker Administration has worked to address via initiatives such as our Illinois Connected Communities program, Broadband READY program, Digital Navigator program, and the recently announced Connect Illinois Computer Equity Network. More information on these initiatives is contained in an appendix to the study.

Thank you for your interest in this topic. I look forward to working with you to move the Pritzker Administration's broadband expansion and equity initiatives in the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Schmit".

Matt Schmit, Chair
Illinois Broadband Advisory Council
Director, Illinois Office of Broadband
Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity