



Chairman Bradford, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here to speak today. As you know, Greenlining's mission is to promote a prosperous, diverse California. And we believe that access to *the* modern basic communications service – that being the internet - is one of the most important factors in getting us there. Universal broadband access should be a policy priority not only for individual and community empowerment, but as a matter of economic growth.

In California, 40% of households earning under \$40,000 a year don't have broadband. 44% of Californians who haven't gone to college don't have broadband. 30% of folks living in the Central Valley and Inland Empire don't have broadband. 54% of Spanish-speaking Latinos don't have broadband.¹ 27% of Californians overall don't have broadband. Why does that matter? Here's one big reason.

Because most of those households have kids in them. Those children and students are growing up without internet access, and it's hampering their ability to thrive in school. The Pew Internet and American Life project just released a report discussing the several ways in which internet access has become a critical part of how they teach and how they interact with parents.² Not having broadband makes it harder for students to succeed in school, and for parents to be involved in their children's education.

So, students find a way to get by. The problem is, they end up at McDonalds or Starbucks to do their homework, because there's free wi-fi there.³ Meanwhile, California is spending millions every year to fight diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and everything else that comes from eating too much junk food, and we're *losing*.

The New England Journal of Medicine has warned that this generation of children could have shorter life expectancies than their parents, which we haven't seen since the mid-1800s. Why? Obesity. And we're sending those kids to McDonalds to do their homework. We need to close the digital divide so our students can do their homework at *home*.

By the way, if that student wants to go to college, he or she would have to sit in McDonalds to apply to either the UC or Cal State systems, because both of those are online only as well. As it stands now, we are not setting our children up for success.

¹ Public Policy Institute of California, http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=263.

² <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teachers-and-technology/Summary-of-Findings.aspx>

³ See "The Web-Deprived Study at McDonald's," Wall Street Journal, January 28, 2013.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324731304578189794161056954.html?mod=WSJ_MID_DLENexttoWhatsNewsTop.





Not only do we need to do better for our students, but we need to do better for our economic outlook. Economists and sociologists have almost universally noted that broadband access and use increase earning potential. They're less willing, though, to put a number on that potential, but the studies that are out there indicate it could be as much as \$2,000 to \$4,000 per person per year.⁴

Now, they say that lawyers are smart people who can't do math, but it's pretty clear even to me that with 11.4 million Californians still lacking affordable broadband access, at \$2,000 to \$4,000 a person we are missing out on billions of dollars a year in economic growth potential.

I'd ask you to consider, and to ask your colleagues outside this committee to consider, whether California can afford to forego billions of dollars in annual economic activity. This is not only an investment worth making, it's an investment imperative if we are going to get California's economy back on track. Thank you.

⁴ See

http://www.russellsage.org/sites/all/files/u4/Bonikowski%20%26%20DiMaggio_Make%20Money%20Surfing%20the%20Web.pdf

