

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Ranking Member Doris Matsui

Hearing on Republican Efforts to Undermine Democrats' Historic Broadband Investments

March 5, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Hudson. We all recognize that reliable high-speed internet is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. It powers our economy. It supports education. It strengthens public health. And, it connects us to our loved ones. That's why, under the Biden administration, Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, investing \$65 billion to close the digital divide.

This included over \$42 billion for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program, or BEAD, to bring high-speed internet to tens of millions of Americans who still lack access. Just as critically, Congress also directed nearly \$3 billion in digital equity grants to ensure all communities have the skills, training, and technology to reap the full benefits of online access.

During the last Administration, NTIA worked diligently with state and local partners to make the most of this once-in-a-generation investment to connect all Americans. Thanks to this diligence, states like Louisiana, Nevada, and Delaware stand ready to put shovels in the ground this year to connect their communities—but only if this Administration moves quickly to allow them go ahead.

Many other states, including California, are hard at work launching a fair and competitive award process and implementing digital equity plans so that our federal broadband dollars go to where they're needed most. Yet instead of building on this progress, President Trump is actively sabotaging it—delaying and injecting uncertainty into federal broadband programs.

Freezing broadband funding ignores the law and harms the tens of millions of Americans who are counting on these programs to get connected. They can't afford to wait, and neither can we. That's certainly true of the Sacramento region.

Just 20 minutes outside the city, rural communities still suffer major gaps in broadband coverage due to years of underinvestment. Head further into the California Delta, and the need is just as urgent—our farming communities rely on broadband for economic growth, education, and basic quality of life.

BEAD is a critical lifeline for these communities. Yet Republicans are delaying BEAD so they can water down—or outright eliminate—protections for affordability, good-paying jobs, and climate-resilient networks. These changes will drive up costs for consumers while driving down the quality of service.

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I'm also deeply concerned by attempts to divert funding from fiber to Elon Musk's Starlink satellite service. Unlike satellite, fiber is a gold standard and future-proof technology that will grow with consumers' data needs over time.

Granted, some remote areas may be better served using non-fiber alternatives. But existing BEAD guidance already recognizes this. We need smart broadband investments that will last. Not short-term fixes that cost taxpayers more in the long run.

Republicans claim they're just being technology neutral. How can we trust this when the Trump administration has given Elon Musk nearly unfettered authority to further his business interests by taking over government contracts and dismantling agencies regulating his companies?

And last week, not a single Republican voted with Democrats to ensure this Committee conducts oversight into conflicts of interest like Musk's. So forgive me if I find it hard to believe that Republicans will ensure that the Trump administration applies broadband rules fairly.

Let's be honest. Today's hearing is about Republicans fishing for excuses to toss three years of work into the trash, undermining our efforts to connect every American. I urge my Republican colleagues to stop the delays... Stop the sabotage... Work with us to fully implement all federal broadband programs, including BEAD and Digital Equity.

This includes holding the Trump administration accountable for delays, conflicts of interest, and violations of the law. Otherwise, the American people will be paying for Republicans' broadband blunders for generations to come.

With that, I yield the balance of my time...