

AB 1560: The California K-12 Internet Inclusion Act

The California K-12 Internet Inclusion Act, AB 1560 (Daly), would do more to immediately close the digital divide for K-12 students and their families than any other proposed policy solution.



Closing Barriers to Internet Adoption

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the disadvantages students face when they do not have access to the Internet at home – unable to participate in remote learning or otherwise access information online. These challenges will remain long after students return to the classroom if California does not advance effective and immediate solutions to bring more Californians online.

California's Internet Service Providers have offered reduced cost Internet access to qualified families with students in grades K-12 for years. Yet, many of the eligible families that could take advantage of these programs fail to do so for a number of reasons, including lack of awareness that the programs exist, digital literacy or affordability.



High-speed broadband service is available to 96.3% of California households. But, roughly **20% of K-12 students lack a functional computing device** or an Internet service subscription to connect from home.

What Will AB 1560 Do?

AB 1560 will remove common barriers to Internet adoption and immediately bring more families of K-12 students online through partnerships with the state and local school districts by:

01 Allowing the state to enter into Sponsored Service Agreements where the state could negotiate and pay for bulk rate residential broadband service, on behalf of local school districts, for the purpose of providing free or low-cost Internet services to low-income families of K-12 students.

02 Requiring the California State Superintendent to set minimum standards for computing devices and report on the number of K-12 students without access to broadband service or an adequate computing device.

Immediate & Lasting Benefits of The California K-12 Internet Inclusion Act

Promote Broadband Adoption. The Department of Technology will be able to negotiate and purchase broadband services at bulk rates on behalf of local school districts for low-income families.

Allow Schools & Students to Benefit from Additional Funding Sources. Participating school districts and low-income families will be able to benefit from state and federal funds available for Sponsored Service Agreements, including new federal broadband and COVID-19 relief funds.

Make Internet Services Free. The state will be able to provide financial assistance and eliminate the monthly financial expense of broadband service for eligible low-income households.

Increase Awareness of Low-Cost Services. The Office of the State Superintendent will be required to make the public and local school districts aware of all low-cost Internet service plans, creating more opportunities for households to find the easiest and most affordable ways to connect students to online learning.

Ensure Access to High-Speed & Reliable Internet. Through state-level review and pre-qualification of service providers, the state will be in control to ensure students get the level of service they need.

Remove Barriers for Families & School Districts. Local school districts will be able to provide Internet service for eligible students without incurring the burden, expense and delay of entering into Sponsored Service Agreements on their own. Families of K-12 students will have a clear process for determining eligibility and signing up for services through their local school districts.

Improve Access to Adequate Devices. While many California organizations and companies generously donate used computers, many of these devices do not allow for equal access to online resources. Setting minimum standards for computing devices will allow the state and local school districts to better ensure students have access to the basic devices they need to connect and succeed.

Provide a Clear Understanding of Student Needs. Annual reporting on the number of K-12 students without access to broadband service or adequate computing devices will provide the state with an accurate assessment of the ongoing challenges and a clear pathway for deploying effective solutions.



Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds Available to Help Close the Divide

New federal COVID-19 relief funds, through the [American Rescue Plan Act](#), provide an opportunity for California to invest in broadband adoption programs. Governor Newsom and the State Legislature should make funding available to bring more students online by passing and providing adequate funding for AB 1560. Through this leadership and partnership with broadband companies, AB 1560 would provide for an immediate pathway to Internet connectivity for many K-12 students and their families.