

# Protecting Digital Equity Act Funds



## What is the Digital Equity Act (DEA)?

- Passed in 2021 as part of the Congress's historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which allocated \$2.75 billion to the DEA, along with various broadband provisions, to comprehensively close the digital divide with common-sense programs.
- It ensures the other BIL programs like the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program are not building bridges to nowhere by solving the issues that keep people offline.

## Why Does DEA Matter?

- Closing the digital divide means:
  - K-12 students in rural West Virginia can excel like their peers in urban communities.
  - Entrepreneurs in Cincinnati, Atlanta, and Asheville can launch tech startups without the high rents of Silicon Valley.
  - Veterans in rural Texas can see a doctor online without long travel.
  - Seniors in Maine can get cybersecurity training to protect themselves from online hackers and scams.
- Research shows that all the barriers to broadband adoption—limited (or no) broadband service, unaffordable internet subscriptions, and a lack of skills and devices for safe internet use—must be addressed for households to connect and remain online.



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## State-Expected Funding in Washington

**\$42.8M**

**Capacity Grant(s):** \$15,983,291.58

**Competitive Grant:** \$26,900,000

The DEA programs fund projects to close the digital divide for eight covered populations including seniors, rural households, and low-income households.

**77.6%**

**of Washington's population, or 6,038,000 are covered populations impacted by DEA Programs.**



**23% OLDER  
ADULTS**



**26.8% RURAL  
HOUSEHOLDS**



**15.8% LOW-INCOME  
HOUSEHOLDS**

## Community and State Impacts if DEA is Rescinded:

DEA programs are in danger of being rescinded, paused, or burdened with government red tape. This could either eliminate or drastically reduce the positive impacts the programs were designed to achieve, including:



**Economic Opportunity:** Small businesses and entrepreneurs will struggle to compete with international companies due to limited access to customers and e-commerce. Workers are unable to create resumes, apply for jobs, or take online classes, hindering their ability to contribute to the U.S. economy.



**Education:** Students will have to do school work in parking lots, fall behind their peers in China, and will not learn how to use AI and other emerging technologies.



**Healthcare:** Nearly 4.5 million Americans living in rural communities won't be able to get the healthcare they need from their doctors.



**Safety:** Without cybersecurity training and AI literacy, seniors, veterans, and rural families are vulnerable and risk losing hard-earned paychecks and savings to scams and fraud.

## About the National Digital Inclusion Alliance

In today's digital age, access to the internet is not just a luxury; it's a necessity. Yet, millions of individuals and families remain disconnected, facing barriers that hinder their ability to thrive in a technology-driven world. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) is at the forefront of the movement to bridge this digital divide, advocating for access to technology, training, and resources for all communities.