

Expand Broadband Deployment and Reform FCC Mapping Methodology

Issue and Background:

- As the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic quickly forced the vast majority of America’s workforce into a remote and virtual setting, the importance of reliable and affordable broadband has never been more of a paramount issue facing our nation.
- COVID-relief legislation (CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan Act) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) have provided unprecedented federal resources to improving broadband across the country.
- The IIJA includes \$65 billion for broadband, including \$42.45 billion in grants directly to the states. This represents the largest investment in broadband in American history. The IIJA also contains provisions requiring the FCC to reform their mapping methodology.
- State CIOs understand the importance of broadband in supporting nearly every initiative in their portfolio – from improving digital government services to supporting remote work solutions to providing education and healthcare opportunities for their citizens, as well as participation in the 21st century economy.
- In this year’s [State CIO Top 10 Priorities](#), broadband was ranked by the state CIOs as their #3 priority, which includes strengthening statewide connectivity, implementing rural broadband expansion and 5G deployment.
- Currently, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) collects and maps all data on current broadband availability and service speeds, which result in inaccurate and outdated broadband coverage maps. This creates a significant issue that needs to be addressed to improve connectivity across the country.
- In a November 2021 Congressional hearing, FCC Chairwoman Rosenworcel backed up this assertion by stating that her agency’s maps simply “stink.”

Recommendation:

- **Leverage state-led broadband mapping strategies.** Congress and the FCC should look to leverage broadband mapping strategies that have been deployed in state broadband offices, including [Georgia’s Broadband Deployment Initiative](#), to challenge and amend the FCC’s broadband data collection processes. A more accurate mapping process will result in improved tools to inform citizens and measure the progress of broadband programs.
- **Increase partnerships between state and federal governments.** Congress and the FCC should increase and enhance these partnerships to resolve the numerous challenges associated with broadband expansion in rural and low-income areas across the country. These challenges include lack of economic incentive for internet providers and lack of competition that keep broadband prices too high.

