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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

Bridging the Digital Divide: A More Connected Pennsylvania
Wednesday, March 31, 2021 | 1 p.m.

Hosted by

State Representative Rob Matzie
Democratic Chairman, House Consumer Affairs Committee

1 p.m. **PANEL ONE**
Brian Barno
Broadband Cable Association of Pennsylvania

Questions from Legislators

1:30 p.m. **PANEL TWO**
Joseph Glinka, Government Affairs Director
Gateway Health

Questions from Legislators

2 p.m. **PANEL THREE**
David Kerr, President of External Affairs
AT&T

Questions from Legislators

2:30 p.m. **PANEL FOUR**
Erica Swanson, Head of Community Engagement
Grow with Google

Questions from Legislators

Testimony of Brian F. Barno, Vice President – Government Affairs
Broadband Cable Association of Pennsylvania
before the
House Democratic Policy Committee on the Digital Divide

March 31, 2021



bcapa.com

First in Broadband. The Future of Broadband. ®

Chairman Bizzarro and Member of the House Democratic Policy Committee.

I am Brian Barno, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Broadband Cable Association of PA (BCAP). BCAP members serve Pennsylvania residents in all 67 counties with broadband, video, voice, and home security and automation services.

As the Commonwealth's leading broadband provider, the cable industry is committed to closing the rural and urban digital divide. And as our increasingly web-based society moves forward requiring the most cutting-edge advances in telecommunications, the vast majority of Pennsylvanians have broadband access largely due to cable companies having launched – in the mid-1990s – a private capital investment of more than \$10 billion to build out robust Internet service throughout the state. Over 85,000 miles of high-speed cable plant – providing services for approximately 3 million customers – connects our state's cities, townships, boroughs and rural areas.

During 2020, Pennsylvania was no different from the rest of the country, and most of the world. The COVID-19 pandemic brought enormous suffering, well beyond the incalculable, immeasurable health struggles. The economic and financial hardship was widespread, with our citizens and businesses relying daily on technology and the Internet to assist them working from home, seeking a job, joining a classroom and countless other interactions.

Remote work, distance learning, telehealth, streaming, and live video chats took off. The Commonwealth's cable companies came together early on to use its services, reach, and influence to help connect as many to the Internet as possible. It is no exaggeration to point to

broadband connections being responsible for enabling Pennsylvanians, and Americans, to continue working, learning, and communicating with one another.

Our networks have been tested during the COVID-19 pandemic, with employees at home and students required to use online learning. In Pennsylvania, we've seen a 27.2 percent increase in downstream demand, and a 53.1 percent increase in upstream demand. In addition, Wi-Fi data and cable broadband support of mobile data has dramatically increased. The verdict: cable broadband backbones showed "no signs of congestion." This performance stands in contrast to Europe where network performance deteriorated. European Union (EU) Commissioners asked consumers and streaming video companies to shift from high-definition to standard definition¹. Why the difference? It's all about investment. Pennsylvania cable companies have invested over \$10 billion in private capital since the 1996 Telecommunications Act to build the state's most robust, widespread network to deliver voice, video and data services.

While our networks have performed well, the pandemic has reinforced the importance that everyone has high-speed broadband. How do we close this digital divide? With 95 percent of Pennsylvania households having access – from cable companies – to Internet speeds meeting or exceeding the FCC's broadband benchmarks, Pennsylvania's digital divide has absolutely been shrinking. But the cable industry's commitment to continually reduce that gap remains through ongoing broadband network expansion, and offering speeds as fast as 1 gigabit in most areas. That commitment from Pennsylvania's cable companies also includes contributions that provide critical broadband services to thousands of the Commonwealth's schools, libraries, medical facilities and community centers in urban, suburban and rural areas.

¹ *TechCrunch* – "Netflix and other streaming platforms urged to switch to SD during COVID-19 crisis" (March 19, 2020)

Pennsylvania's broadband cable industry remains engaged with local and state government to further all efforts to expand access throughout rural Pennsylvania.

The cable industry is committed to further narrowing the digital divide by promoting the benefits of broadband, encouraging families to connect, and by offering programs that help families overcome barriers they may face. BCAP members have launched discounted programs – such as Charter's Spectrum Internet Assist² – making low-cost broadband service available to low-income families. These invaluable programs provide discounted Internet services, hardware, and digital literacy training to increase accessibility and help close the digital divide. And just last week, Comcast's Internet Essentials program celebrated its tenth anniversary by committing an investment of \$1 billion over the next ten years³ to help further close that divide and provide more low-income Americans the tools and resources they need to succeed in our increasingly digital world. This program has already helped connect ten million low-income Americans to broadband Internet at home, most for the very first time.

BCAP members are looking at the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households⁴. Those homes can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers. Eligible households include those that: receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch or school breakfast program; are receiving a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year; have experienced a substantial loss of income during the pandemic (the household had a total 2020 income below \$99,000 for single filers and

² Charter Communications news release "Charter to Offer Free Access to Spectrum Broadband and Wi-Fi For 60 Days For New K-12 and College Student Households and More" (March 13, 2021)

³ Comcast Corp. news release "Comcast Commits to Investing \$1B Over Next Ten Years to reach 50M Low-Income Americans With Tools and resources to Succeed In Digital World" (March 24, 2021)

⁴ Federal Communications Commission website - www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit

\$198,000 for joint filers); or meets the eligibility criteria for a participating providers' existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

The federal government has stepped up with the FCC's Connect America Fund II, which will spend \$56,831,061 for to extend broadband to 54,812 locations unserved Pennsylvania locations⁵; and the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF), which will spend \$368,743,200 to bring broadband to 184,505 unserved Pennsylvania locations⁶. Both programs are over next 10 years.

The American Rescue Plan is now poised to expend billions for broadband infrastructure. Michael Powell, former FCC Chairman and now President of NCTA - The Internet & Television Association, said that these dollars could result in a "golden age of broadband investment, or a costly sinkhole that squanders billions and does little to close actual broadband gaps." Powell called the establishment of guardrails for the use of the money and cautioned about allowing municipal networks to overbuild commercial ones, and subsidized providers to overbuild existing plant. "We need to allow engineers making decisions about network construction, not regulators, lawyers and lobbyists," Powell said.⁷

There are now legislative proposals to define existing broadband service as 100 Mbps download and upload speeds.

"For the vast majority of Americans, unless they are performing remote tele-surgery at home, upload speeds do not need to be symmetrical to download speeds, and that's even taking into account the more extensive video uses seen during the pandemic," said former FCC

⁵ Federal Communications Commission news release "Connect America Fund Auction to Expand Broadband to over 700,000 Rural Homes and Business" (August 28, 2018)

⁶ Federal Communications Commission news release "Successful Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction to Expand broadband to Over 10 Million Rural Americans" (December 7, 2020)

⁷ *Multichannel News* "NCTA's Michael Powell on Broadband Subsidies: Spend Smart" (March 19, 2021)

Commissioner Mike O’Rielly in testimony last week before the House Commerce Committee over the “Leading Infrastructure for Tomorrow’s America Act.” “Keep in mind that an appreciable portion of increased Internet usage has been in the form of video conferencing, telework, and distance learning, which are rather low bandwidth, taking take far less upstream bandwidth than 4K and high-definition video subscription services.” And, setting arbitrary and out of touch speed levels far in excess of expected growth or current usage undermines innovation, since it would effectively eliminate all broadband technologies, except for fiber. Codifying or adopting these exaggerated speeds will steer providers to move investments and deployment to easier to serve areas, further delaying efforts to bring access to all Americans. That is not to suggest that the current speed threshold couldn’t be changed, but it must be done very judiciously.”

Again, it is an understatement say that an Internet connection is an absolute must-have for school assignments, healthcare, communicating with friends, finding a job, and starting a business. While broadband service is now available to virtually all Pennsylvanians, too many families still remain unconnected to this important network. BCAP members and the broadband cable industry are committed to closing this digital divide by promoting the benefits of broadband, encouraging families to connect, and by offering programs that help families overcome barriers they may face.

Testimony of David Kerr, president, AT&T Pennsylvania
Before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Democratic Policy Committee
Bridging the Digital Divide
March 31, 2021

Chairman Bizzarro, Members of the Committee:

On behalf of our more than 1,500 employees working in Pennsylvania, thank you for the opportunity to discuss how the public and private sectors can continue to work together to help close the digital divide in our Commonwealth and our country. During our conversation today, I will share some of the things our company has done recently to address this issue and our perspectives on how we can move forward in a comprehensive and collaborative way.

This past year has brought into sharp focus the importance of connectivity – for teaching and learning, healthcare, work, socializing with family and friends, and even legislating. It’s also reminded us that we have much work to do to bridge the digital divide so that Pennsylvania’s children in particular have access to the tools and resources they need to succeed in school, on the job and throughout their lives.

Investing in mobile broadband

One way we are working to provide more access to mobile broadband is through our ongoing investments in Pennsylvania. From 2017 to 2019, AT&T invested more than \$850 million in our network in Pennsylvania. We’re regularly turning on new cell sites, providing more availability of mobile broadband service.

In the past year, we turned on new sites in 40 counties across Pennsylvania, including sites in many of our more rural communities. We announced new sites in Beaver, Erie, Cambria, Clearfield, Crawford, Columbia, Venango and Washington Counties, among others. We also made upgrades to sites statewide, boosting network coverage, capacity, and speed for customers across Pennsylvania.

In addition, through our public-private partnership with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government – we are turning on new [FirstNet](#) cell sites in areas that were identified as high priorities by state and local first responders.

In addition to further elevating public safety’s connected experience in support of their emergency response, this new infrastructure will also help improve the overall coverage experience for AT&T wireless customers in the area. These sites were constructed using AT&T commercial spectrum and Band 14 spectrum, which is nationwide, high quality spectrum set aside by the government specifically for FirstNet. Those in the area of these new sites can take advantage of the AT&T spectrum bands, as well as Band 14 when additional capacity is available. Last year, we announced new, purpose-built sites across the Northern Tier and in Clearfield and Bedford Counties.

Read more about our network investments at [Pennsylvania.att.com](https://www.att.com/pennsylvania).

Reliability for schools & virtual learners

When in person learning came to a halt last year, an estimated 17 million children nationwide didn't have a reliable internet connection or device, illuminating a "[homework gap](#)" that made it nearly impossible for many to complete schoolwork at home. This disproportionately affected students of color, as well as students with disabilities and students in rural and under-resourced neighborhoods.

AT&T has made it a priority to provide students access to learning – and teachers access to digital education tools. Last year, we committed \$30 million to address the homework gap, including:

- \$10 million to nonprofit [Connected Nation](#) to provide Wi-Fi hotspots and free AT&T internet service to connect 35,000 of our nation's most vulnerable students. This includes students in foster care, English language learners, students with disabilities, or those experiencing homelessness. Through this initiative, four organizations in Pennsylvania have been selected by Connected Nation to receive devices and service for one year. The recipients are Elwyn Davidson School in Elwyn; Fairwold Academy in Fort Washington; Valley Youth House in West Chester; and Avon Grove School District.
- A \$10 million [Distance Learning Family Connections Fund](#) to aid distance learning and keep families connected. Recipients included Kahn Academy, Learn Fresh's [NBA Math Hoops](#) program, and Sesame Workshop, among others.
- \$10 million to [economic opportunity initiatives in Black and other underserved communities](#) – including support for organizations such as Year Up, Per Scholas, YouthBuild and Jobs for America's Graduates, which offer programming in Pennsylvania.

AT&T supported several other local initiatives to help students remain connected and engaged in learning, including:

- AT&T teamed up with the City of Philadelphia's Office of Innovation and Technology and others to launch PHLDonateTech, an initiative calling on residents and businesses to donate, recycle, and provide computers to families and people in need across Philadelphia.
- [Chester County Futures](#) received a grant to support the Passport to College program. The program prepares over 200 low income high school students for higher education and beyond through mentoring, college tours, and after-school enrichment sessions which focus on college readiness, career exploration and skill building activities.
- [Coded by Kids](#) in Philadelphia received a grant to support staff, camera equipment, and student incentives to transition CbK Academy to an online platform used by high school students in Philadelphia for online tech education due to COVID-19.
- [Lycoming College](#) received a grant to support student scholarships and personnel for the Lycoming Summer Academy, a two-week program focused on academic preparedness, career awareness and community building for low income and/or first-generation college students in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.
- [Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Sciences](#) received a grant to support staff, supplies and curriculum copies for Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Sciences (PGSS), a 5-week summer program for 64 high school students in Pittsburgh. The program focuses on increasing academic and college readiness in fields related to STEM.

- Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Foundation received a grant to support the AT&T Foundation STEM Awards which provide twenty-five \$1,000 scholarships to college students in Pennsylvania to help cultivate Pennsylvania's future workforce in computer technology, advanced manufacturing and energy industries.
- Taller Puertorriqueno in Philadelphia received a grant to support staff and art mentors, art supplies, field trips and other program expenses for the Youth Artist Program, an artistic-skill development college access program for at-risk Latino high school students from Philadelphia, PA who are interested in careers in the creative industry.
- Allies for Children in Pittsburgh received a contribution to support a community-wide initiative to close the digital divide in Pittsburgh.

AT&T also continues to [offer](#) discounted options to more than 135,000 public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and universities to help keep students and teachers connected. Since March 2020, we have connected more than 490,000 students and teachers across 49 states and the District of Columbia, including Pennsylvania, with affordable and flexible mobile connectivity. We remain actively engaged with local leaders, K-12 school districts, and colleges and universities as we continue to connect students and teachers in Pennsylvania and across the country.

The Path Ahead

Closing the homework connectivity gap is a top national priority. At AT&T, we will continue to do our part to keep students connected to their teachers with the support necessary to help facilitate remote learning.

Achieving our shared goals will require a commitment to ongoing collaboration among the private and public sectors – state and federal.

Think of addressing the digital divide – broadband accessibility and affordability – as a three-legged stool.

First, Pennsylvania needs to put in place the appropriate tax and regulatory policies to incent the continued investment of the private sector. Second, Pennsylvania policymakers need to ensure there is viable a pipeline of workers to help build out advanced telecommunications networks. And ultimately, getting a great deal of attention, and rightly so, there must be funding for investment in unserved and underserved areas of Pennsylvania.

The legislature last year took a step by passing Act 132 of 2020 and seeding it with \$5 million.

As you know, the American Rescue Plan, combined with last year's COVID stimulus legislation, are delivering a significant infusion of federal funding to close the broadband availability gap – and further closing the digital divide. Lawmakers in Pennsylvania can take action to ensure those funds are indeed used to bridge the digital divide -- effectively and equitably.

For example, you can formulate policies and mechanisms to distribute these funds according to several guiding principles:

- Accurate mapping is critical to ensure that government funding is targeted to reach specific unserved locations. Given the FCC broadband map will show where broadband is and is not available on a location-by-location basis, there is no need for the states to expend additional funding to create duplicative state maps.
- Funding should be designed to get broadband service to the most people who are unserved and likely to remain unserved, in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible.
- Government funding programs should be carefully crafted to not interfere where the market is working, nor should they replace opportunities where the market can work. Broadband networks are expensive to deploy, maintain, operate, and upgrade. If a government-owned network struggles or fails, the ultimate burden will fall on local taxpayers. Scaled commercial networks are, moreover, superior at following cost curves down, innovation curves up, detecting and remediating cybersecurity risks, and having the wherewithal and scale to deploy and redeploy assets flexibly, reducing stranded facilities and enhancing disaster recovery.
- While policymakers are appropriately focused on increasing broadband availability, it is equally important to dedicate resources towards encouraging broadband adoption or subscribership.

Lawmakers in Pennsylvania can also help ensure that the digital divide is closed by supporting several reforms at the federal level.

[As we have voiced](#) over the last several months, Congressional action is needed to [update, modernize and fund](#) federal Universal Service programs so they can more effectively address persistent gaps in broadband availability, affordability and adoption. For example, we've made specific proposals for [modernizing the Lifeline program](#) to more seamlessly support broadband connectivity for low-income households and we have argued for more aggressive action to address the rural availability gap in a technology-neutral manner.

In addition, the National Urban League recently released a report on "Connecting and Uplifting America." The report focuses on a singular and essential question: "How can the tools of the information economy be employed to create a more equitable and inclusive society." [Read more](#) about this bold plan and AT&T's efforts to drive us toward a more equitable and connected future.

We also recently filed our application to participate in the FCC's [Emergency Broadband Benefit](#) program so [we can offer](#) low-income customers additional options for discounted broadband services. AT&T's application was recently approved, and we expect the FCC will offer more details soon.

AT&T stands ready to work with this committee, the General Assembly and Governor's Office, and other stakeholders to craft comprehensive, thoughtful, and sustainable public policies to better connect our families, schools and communities.



Gateway
HealthSM

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

of Gateway Health

Delivered by

Joseph M. Glinka

Government Affairs Director

For a Public Hearing on Bridging the Digital Divide

Before the Democratic House Policy Committee

March 31, 2021

(Four Pages to Follow)

Thank you, Chairman Bizzarro, Representative Snyder, and distinguished members of the Committee, for the opportunity to discuss the Commonwealth's digital divide with you today. My name is Joseph Glinka and I am the Government Affairs Director for Gateway Health. Gateway Health is a Pennsylvania-based, mission driven, non-profit managed care organization serving over 350,000 vulnerable Pennsylvanians.

At Gateway Health, we believe in caring for the whole person in all communities where the need is greatest, and we see a future in which everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve their best health.

Through our leading Medicaid and Medicare Advantage programs, Gateway Health is coordinating health care that goes beyond doctors and medicine to deliver whole person care. Our associates are helping to drive this kind of health care collaboration with a network of nearly 30,000 primary care physicians, specialists, hospitals and other ancillary providers. Gateway Health is also committed to supporting our neighbors through our many community outreach and engagement programs, and through partnerships with local organizations.

Gateway Health's legacy of addressing Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), which refers to the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, can be traced back to the start of the company more than 27 years ago. Taking a holistic approach to our members' care continues to be at the core of who we are at Gateway Health. Driven by our mission, we will continue to play a leading role in improving health and socioeconomic equality in the communities we serve and we carefully consider members' physical, mental and socioeconomic health while coordinating their personalized care. Whether it's providing them with assistance for housing, food, employment, or transportation, we're here to guide them every step of the way of their healthcare journey.

Over time, we have learned that these non-clinical SDOH factors have a considerable influence on one's overall health status, accountable for up to 80% of one's overall health status.

Access to affordable, reliable, high speed internet has been described as a "super-determinant of health" by public health experts, as it is now integral to our ability to work, learn, and access community resources.

Broadband is offered through several different media (cable, fiber, satellite, etc...) that transmit data at high speeds. The definition of what transmission speeds constitute broadband has evolved over time, but the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently defines broadband to include connections with download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of at least 3 Mbps.

Despite how essential broadband access has become, millions of Pennsylvanians still lack it. In a 2019 study sponsored by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, researchers found that the median speed in the Commonwealth did not meet FCC requirements, and in no county were FCC required speeds received by more than 50 percent of the populace. Critical

investments have been made over the past 18 months to improve broadband infrastructure in rural areas, but accessibility issues extend to the cost of service as well, even as infrastructure investment expands availability.

Access to high speed internet impacts many areas of our members' lives, and the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) put has put a fine point on how our opportunity and ability to learn, work, and gather information online is absolutely essential to our social, financial, and physical well-being.

- **Education:** Our members, including over 109,000 school-age children, need reliable broadband access to perform daily school tasks, including homework submission, and to access additional resources that require an internet connection to use. Many members looking to earn a college degree or even a GED would also benefit immensely from reliable broadband access at home – both for completing associated coursework and for the ability to pursue these goals with the flexibility of online programs or courses.
 - Research shows that education creates opportunities for better health and is linked to health through 3 major interrelated pathways: health knowledge and behaviors; employment and income, and social and psychological factors.
 - For many students in Pennsylvania, the PHE has prompted an enormous transition from the physical classroom to the virtual classroom. Unreliable broadband connection cuts children off from their teachers, classmates, and academic supports considerably if not entirely.
 - Even beyond the PHE, more and more public schools are using online resources that require an internet connection in order for students to complete homework assignments and access reading and studying materials. Teachers also use online platforms to communicate with parents about their children. One Pennsylvania newspaper reported in 2019 that students in rural areas rely on free Wi-Fi offered in public places, such as a McDonald's parking lot, to complete their homework assignments.

- **Employment:** Our members need reliable broadband access to conduct job searches, apply for jobs, to take advantage of work-from-home flexibilities, and to be productive while doing so. Many of our members do work but increasing telework flexibilities may open new opportunities for our members, provided they have reliable broadband access to take advantage of them.
 - Unemployment, job insecurity, workplace closure, and underemployment all have implications for physical and mental health and all can also be connected to the availability of reliable broadband.
 - Broadband access can also impact job performance. As of October 2019, 60% of adult Medicaid enrollees in Pennsylvania were working. A survey published in April 2020 found that over one third of respondents said weak internet prevented them from doing their work, and 83 percent said they could be productive without internet for merely less than half a day.

- **Resource Information:** Reliable, affordable broadband is now essential for both gathering and communicating the information we all need to function in our daily lives. Everything from accessing transportation, including public transit schedules and ride share apps, to grocery shopping to applying for other public services like housing, temporary financial assistance, or supplemental nutrition benefits, can, and is expected to be, done online. Without broadband access at home, members are forced to rely on print or telephonic resources, which often do not offer the same immediacy or up-to-date accuracy as those available online.
 - The American Medical Informatics Association sent a comment to the FCC outlining the importance of internet availability to provide a patient's access to their own health data as well as broadband enabled technology to fight chronic disease, including opioid addiction disorder.
 - The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services is currently rolling out a statewide resources and referral tool, RISE PA, which is an online interactive platform that will serve as a care coordination resource for providers including health care and social services organizations and provide an access point to search for services. Without internet access, the tool will not reach its target audience.

There are two main barriers to accessibility to reliable broadband – infrastructure and cost.

- **Infrastructure:** Even with the influx of investment in broadband infrastructure that has resulted in the wake of the PHE, Penn State telecommunications professor Sascha Meinrath noted that the \$7 billion included in the December coronavirus relief package is the “tip of the iceberg” in terms of funding required to deploy universal broadband nationwide, which he predicts will require “tens, potentially hundreds of billions of dollars.”
- **Cost:** According to research from Broadband-Now, 70 percent of Americans have access to broadband that costs \$60 per month or less as of December 31, 2020, but current research suggests that \$10 per month is realistic cost low-income individuals can bear. According to surveys from the Pew Research Center, 50% of those who lack access to broadband cite monthly cost of the service as a factor.

While we are pleased to see momentum around infrastructure deployment has picked up in the past 12-18 months, we need continued, regular investment in deployment and maintenance of broadband infrastructure beyond one-time grant funding to secure reliable broadband access into the future.

Effectively addressing the Commonwealth's Digital Divide in the spirit of equity is vital to Gateway Health's plan members and to all the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens. Closing the Digital Divide can have a ripple effect through our members' lives: improving access to telehealth encounters leading to desirable health outcomes; family-sustaining telework opportunities leading to a potential pathway out of poverty; improving access to educational resources preparing our youth leading to productive vocations and occupations;

and access to community based resources that can lead to a better, more stable overall health status for those who remain on our safety net.

Achieving these outcomes lowers the overall cost of care over time, and can lower dependence on the publicly funded safety net – both of which stand to lower costs for the Human Services portion of the General Fund Budget, which currently accounts for nearly 39% of the overall General Fund spend. In addition, creating a viable pathway out of poverty stimulates our economy and improves the Commonwealth’s tax base.

With the billions of American Rescue Act dollars starting to flow to the Commonwealth coupled with the possibility of a subsequent federal infrastructure package this summer, Gateway Health believes that it is imperative that the General Assembly take steps to enact sound public policy ensuring an equitably accessible high-speed broadband infrastructure in both unserved and underserved areas of the Commonwealth so that all Pennsylvania residents can afford this essential and life-sustaining resource.

First, Gateway health recommends establishing a State Broadband Authority in Pennsylvania. Whether through the creation of a new entity or delegation of authority to an existing statewide office or authority, we believe Pennsylvania needs a comprehensive broadband deployment plan and an authority to implement it. The plan should include an up-to-date assessment of current service areas, address cost barriers to broadband adoption, and establish digital literacy initiatives.

Second, Gateway Health recommends initiating a conversation in terms of what it would mean to regulate high-speed broadband as a public utility. As illustrated above, access to affordable, reliable broadband has become a basic need, on par with electricity, water, heat, and telephone service. As such, price, availability, and service could benefit from regulation as a public utility, to insure equitable access to all citizens.

Finally, Gateway Health recommends addressing the affordability of high-speed broadband for Low Income Individuals and Families. For those with limited income, even \$10-\$15 per month for broadband service will compete with other utility bills, such as phone, electricity, and the cost of food. Some strategies for keeping costs affordable for low income individuals include:

- Strengthening the FCC Lifeline Program which provides subsidies for broadband service.
- By providing socioeconomic data to broadband providers offering low-income programs to ensure those programs are utilized to their greatest potential.
- Requiring affordable tiers of broadband service by providers receiving public funding.

In closing, Gateway Health looks forward to supporting and working with you on this critical public policy matter and we thank you once again for the opportunity to share our thoughts today in this forum.

Rebuilding Local Economies

How Digital Tools Can Support Small Businesses and Job Seekers in Your Community



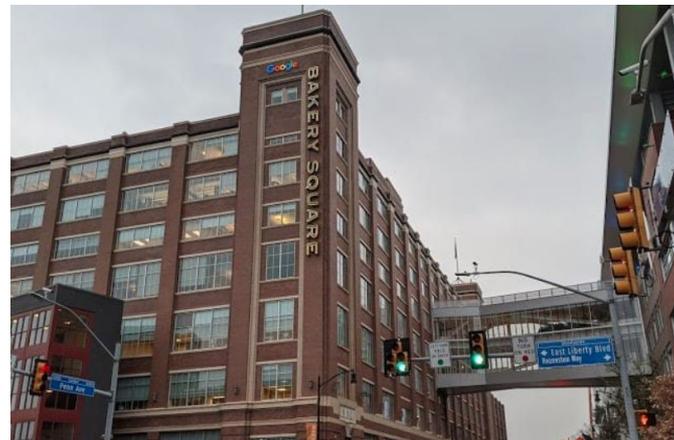
Context

- **Grow with Google is our company's initiative to create economic opportunities for all.** Since 2017, more than six million Americans have grown their businesses and careers with help from Grow with Google's free tools, training and in-person workshops.
- Nearly **two-thirds of all new jobs created since 2010 required either high- or medium-level digital skills**, but —1 in 3 American workers have very limited or no digital skills. ([National Skills Coalition](#))
- A four-year degree is not always required to enter good-paying, high-growth careers. Absence of a college degree cannot be a barrier to economic security, especially when **2/3 of Americans do not complete college degrees**. ([Economic Policy Institute](#))

Google in Pennsylvania

Helping Pennsylvania businesses and job seekers

- **760** full time employees in Pittsburgh
- **625,000 PA businesses** connect to customers using Google tools
- **Nearly 6,000 Pennsylvanians** trained, including **2,600+** Black & Latino SMBs by local Digital Coach
- **3,900+** Pennsylvanians enrolled in Google IT Support Certificate
- **\$11.93 billion of economic activity** created for nearly 62k PA businesses, nonprofits, publishers, creators, and developers in 2020.



Google's Pittsburgh office in Bakery Square

See full report at economicimpact.google.com/state/pa

New research:
Small businesses are using
digital tools to stay resilient

The Digital Safety Net Saved Millions

3C has engaged over **14,000 Small businesses** across the US and Europe over the past year - studying the effects of the pandemic on SMBs, with a specific focus on how they are using digital tools to adapt, survive and thrive. This three-part research has taken place in May 2020, Sept. 2020 and now, February 2021.

The big takeaway: **There is a Digital Safety Net that saved millions of small businesses from closing during the past year**, and for those who were digitally advanced heading into the pandemic - their ability to mitigate losses and even thrive during a global pandemic has positioned them to build on their advantage in a post-COVID world.

This is creating a widening gap among SMBs, where **those that embrace digital tools see a far brighter future in every way.**

The full report can be found at digitallydriven.connectedcouncil.org

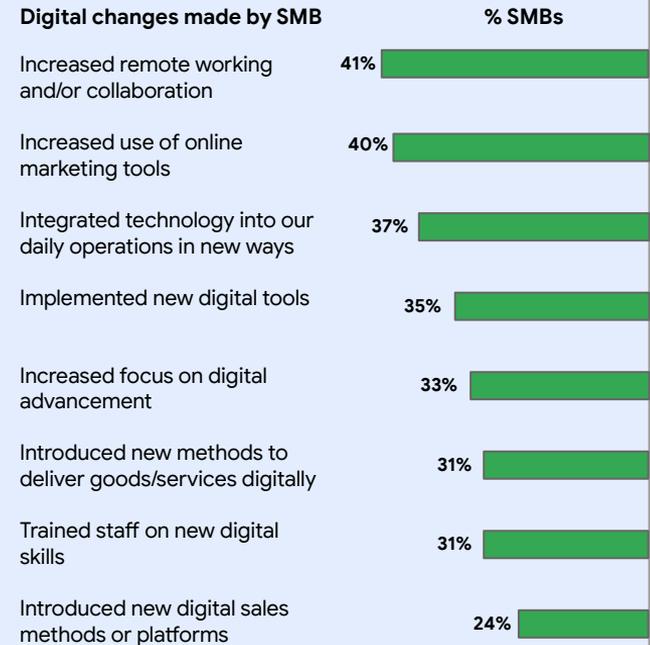


Digital Tools Boom During COVID

COVID-19 has brought about increased SMB adoption of tools, even for those reluctant to embrace them.

- **98% of SMBs say digital tools are helpful** in running their business, with **59%** saying they have been more helpful during the pandemic.
- **37% of SMBs say they would have had to close** all or part of their business without digital tools.
- **Nearly all (97%)** digitally advanced small businesses adopted new digital tools and business strategies during the pandemic, while **only half (51%)** of digitally uncertain businesses did.

Analysis: Which of the following digital changes has your business made in response to COVID?



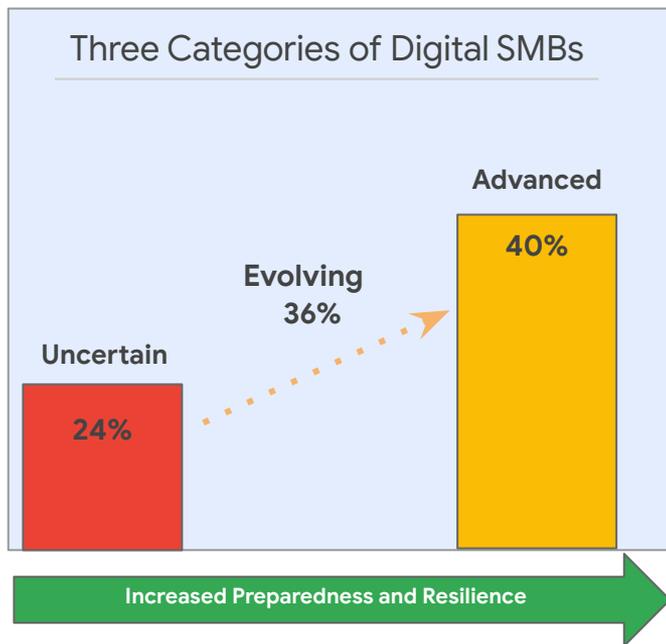
Digitally Advanced SMBs are More Optimized and More *Optimistic*

Analysis: Tools that make good businesses better

| Tools | % Revenue Improvement (if used) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Online training platforms | +11% |
| Business/Data Analytics tools | +8% |
| E-commerce on business website | +8% |
| Online hiring platforms | +8% |
| CRM | +7% |
| Email Platforms | +7% |
| Business website | +7% |
| Customer Insights tools | +6% |
| Collaboration tools | +6% |
| Digital Ads | +5% |
| Online Marketplace | +5% |
| Video Conferencing | +5% |

- **Digital tools that optimize your business and other digital investments deliver the most value.**
- **“Finding new customers” and “keeping existing customers” have consistently remained the most important priorities** for the future across all of our surveys and polling over the last year.
- **81% of small businesses cite future preparedness as a top concern**, with 89% of digitally advanced vs. 65% of digitally uncertain small businesses desiring to become more resilient.
- **96% of all SMBs feel optimistic that they will return to pre-COVID business conditions post-pandemic.**
- Despite all the challenges of COVID-19, **74% of SMBs believe their businesses will fully recover within a year.**
- **92% of small businesses are optimistic** that their business will grow and thrive over the next 3 to 5 years (15 state poll).

Digitally Advanced Businesses Are Leading



- Digital adoption cut revenue losses by more than half (**-12% for digitally advanced SMBs vs. -23% for digitally uncertain SMBs**)
- Digitally advanced SMBs doubled hiring at a rate of **2x more employees** on average vs. digitally uncertain SMBs.
- Digitally advanced businesses retained customers at a **5x better rate** and acquired new customers at a **20x better rate** during the pandemic.
- Digitally advanced SMBs are **more than twice as confident** about making new hires in 2021 (88% vs. 36% of digitally uncertain).

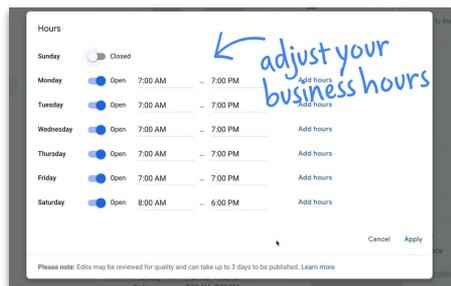
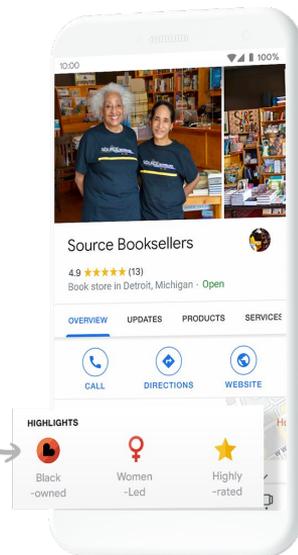
Helping small businesses
reach customers

Helping millions of businesses adapt and recover

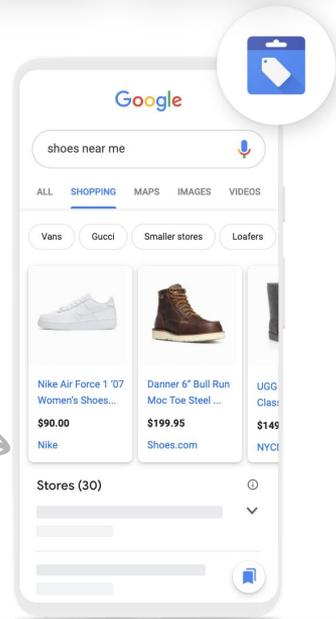
Google tools help businesses stay connected to customer during the pandemic

- **Hundreds of new product features** help small businesses stay connected to customers and update information like business hours or curbside pickup.
- In April 2020, we introduced free listings to Google's Shopping tab **to make it free for merchants to sell on Google.**
- **Google My Business attributes** allow business owners to share that they are women-led, veteran-led, LGBTQ friendly, or Black-owned.

SMBs can opt-in to attributes



SMBs can list products on Google for free

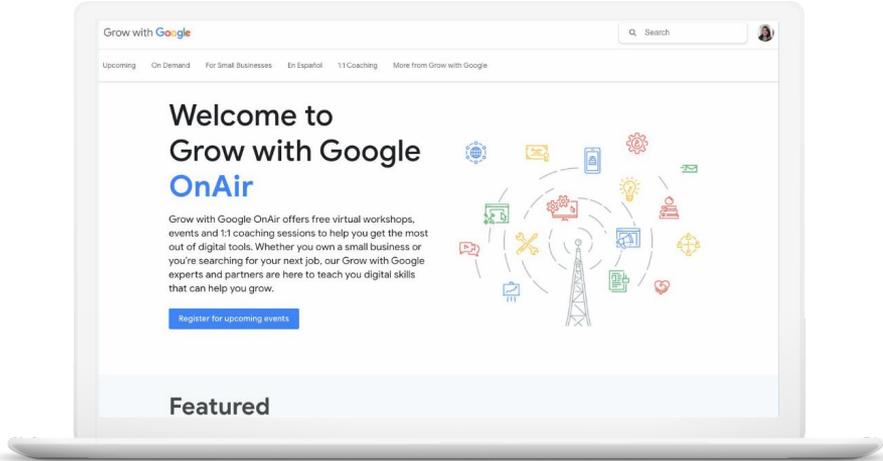


Training Americans on digital skills

Hosting virtual trainings for small businesses and jobseekers

Over 6 million Americans have been trained in digital skills through free Grow with Google workshops since 2017

Grow with Google OnAir Virtual Workshops



8,000+ local partner organizations across the country

+ 300 partners in Pennsylvania have trained nearly 6,600 people



Invite local organizations to join the Partner Program: grow.google/partners

Digital Coaches for Black and Latino Small Businesses



Engage your customers at every step of the customer journey. It's not enough to simply build a website and wait for them to come. Build an omnichannel marketing strategy to reach your customers during those micro-moments that can lead to them becoming lifelong customers.

Kyshira S. Moffett



Grow with Google

To date, Digital Coaches have helped **train 60k+ small business owners** through **more than 1.1K digital skills workshops** on topics such as how to reach new customers online or how to use data to understand website traffic.

Digital Coaches expand into 20 markets:

| | |
|------------|-------------------|
| Atlanta | Harlem |
| Austin | Houston |
| Bay Area | Los Angeles |
| Birmingham | Memphis |
| Columbia | Miami |
| Charlotte | New Orleans |
| Chicago | New York City |
| Cleveland | Phoenix |
| DC | Pittsburgh |
| Detroit | St Louis |

Research:

The changing landscape for American jobseekers

The changing landscape for American job seekers

50% of our workforce will need to reskill by 2025, according to the World Economic Forum.

We need to train our workforce to keep up.

Two-thirds of new jobs need digital skills

Of the 13M new jobs created in the U.S. since 2010 required medium or advanced levels of digital skills. (CFR).

All jobs need digital skills, not just tech

8/10 of middle skills jobs require some digital skills. Digital transformation is not just high-tech jobs. (Burning Glass)

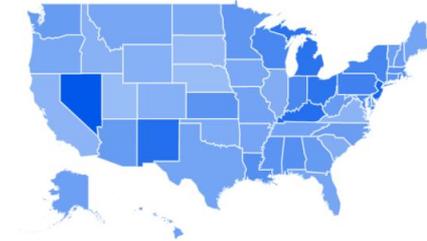
Workers of color are impacted at higher rates

50% of Black workers and 57% of Latino workers have limited or no digital skills. Workers of color are disproportionately affected. (NSC)

People are searching for economic help and skilling resources

- Unemployment is more searched now than at any time in Google history - as are recession and food banks.
- Searches for unemployment benefits are up 850%
- Searches for “how to find a job with no experience” up 750% and “great jobs without a degree” up 850% over the past year.
- Searches for online certifications and training were +69% in the US in late March.
- Searches for "best online courses" have grown globally by over 300% YoY

Searches for Unemployment
by State Past month



Building pathways to
good jobs for everyone

Career certificates for in-demand jobs

Digital-based “middle skill jobs” can offer pathways to prosperity

Google Career Certificates are live

*Prepare for jobs in five
fast-growing industries*

Grow with 



Data Analytics



Project Management



UX Design



Android Developer



IT Support



1.3M in-demand jobs
through rapid reskilling
without the need for a
college degree or prior
experience



3,900 Pennsylvanians
enrolled in the Google IT
Support Certificate
Program



Building pathways to fast-growing jobs

170K+ people have been placed into new jobs through Google's skilling and Google.org grantee programs.

Since launching in 2018, **tens of thousands** of people have graduated from the program and **82% report positive career outcomes**, such as a new job, enhanced skills, promotion, or raise.

More than 170,000 people have been placed into new jobs through Google's skilling programs and Google.org grantee programs.

53% of IT Support graduates come from underrepresented groups, including African American, Latino, Female or Veteran.



Rey Justo, Sacramento, California

Rey lost his job during the pandemic, and enrolled in an IT training program with Merit America. There, he earned his Google Career Certificate. Rey now has a new IT career working as an apprentice at Zennify. Zennify is a part of the Google Hiring Consortium.

Partnering with Top Employers

130+ top employers have signed on to hire certificate graduates

Google has **established an employer consortium of 130+ employers** covering a variety of industry sectors



Deloitte.



Infosys[®]
Navigate your next



Walmart ✨

Google



T Mobile

accenture

verizon ✓



PM Project
Management
Institute

(((SiriusXM)))

HUGE

Expanding Reach to Underserved Communities

Partnered with **100 community colleges** across the US to offer Google Career Certificates to underserved students.

Expanding to **100 CTE (career and technical education)** high schools.

Providing **100,000 need-based scholarships** through partners like National Association of Workforce Boards, Merit America, Per Scholas, NPower, Goodwill, Futuro Health and Generation USA.

Google.org is working with **Opportunity @ Work to improve job placement outcomes** for the 70+ million non-traditional job seekers across virtual credentialing programs.



Montgomery County
Community College



Bring Grow with Google resources to your community



Spread the word. Let small businesses know about Grow with Google's free trainings. Let jobseekers know how they can get on the fast track to in-demand jobs with Google Career Certificates. Visit google.com/grow to learn more.

Join or refer organizations to the Grow with Google Partner Program. Workforce and economic development orgs., libraries, nonprofits, and chambers of commerce can join the Partner Program to access our free tools. If you are already a Partner Program member, join us in hosting digital skills workshops! Visit grow.google/partners

Expand access to the Career Certificates. Refer workforce investment boards to the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) at nawb.org/grow-with-google. Other organizations interested in distributing scholarships should apply through the Partner Program.

Share with employers. Encourage employers to participate in the Google Career Certificate Employer Consortium, where they can recruit from skilled, diverse program graduates. More info at grow.google/employers

Encourage Community Colleges and CTE high schools to offer the certificates. They can learn more at grow.google/certificates-edu

Google

Thank You

Contact Liz Schwab (lschwab@google.com) for additional background or details.



Google is proud to call Pennsylvania home

Creating economic opportunity across the Keystone State

10+ years

Google has proudly called Pennsylvania home for more than a decade with an office in Pittsburgh.

760

Pennsylvanians are employed full-time at Google.

652K Pennsylvania businesses

have connected directly with customers using Google—like [American Hats](#) in Philadelphia, [SleepPhones](#) in Erie, and [Duolingo](#) in Pittsburgh.

\$11.93B

of economic activity provided for 61,900 Pennsylvania businesses, nonprofits, publishers, creators, and developers in 2020.

Helping Pennsylvania businesses and job seekers

For years, Google has supported digital skilling programs that can help sustain small businesses and help people secure fast-growing, good-paying jobs. With so many U.S. workers displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic, these solutions are even more critical to economic recovery. Technology creates growth opportunities for American businesses and can help American workers develop the skills they need to succeed in the digital economy.

\$180M

to support small business resilience

In collaboration with Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), Google made a **\$180M** commitment to support underserved small businesses across the country through the [Grow with Google Small Business Fund](#) and [Google.org Grants program](#). The fund delivers low-interest loans to community development financial institutions (CDFIs), such as **Bridgeway Capital** with offices in Erie, Pittsburgh and Uniontown.

2,600+

underrepresented business owners trained in Pennsylvania by local digital coach

In 2019, Google launched the [Grow with Google Digital Coaches](#) program in Pittsburgh. The program provides free hands-on coaching and digital skills training to help Black and Latino small businesses reach new customers, thrive online, and grow. Our Pennsylvania Digital Coach has helped train **more than 2,600+ small business owners** through digital skills workshops.



“If we didn't have the Play Store and an Android app, we wouldn't be able to reach so many people and offer the free education we're looking to provide.”

Sam Dalsimer
Head of PR at Duolingo
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

3,900+

Pennsylvanians enrolled in the Google IT Support Certificate program

Google is invested in expanding access to [Google Career Certificates](#) to help more people—particularly underserved—grow their careers. To date, the [Google IT Support Certificate](#) has been implemented through 100+ community colleges and dozens of career technical education sites. **3,900+ Pennsylvanians** have enrolled in the program and **60%** of people who take the Google IT Support Certificate course are Black, Latino, women, or veterans.

Google invested **\$175M** toward economic opportunity for Black business owners, startup founders, job seekers, and developers and created a **\$5M [Google for Startups Black Founders Fund](#)** as part of the initiative. In partnership with American Underground, [Google for Startups](#) concluded its fifth annual [Black Founders Exchange program](#) last year. Since the program began, founders have collectively raised **\$23M+** in funding, including **Switchboard Live** and **Stimulus, Inc.** in Philadelphia and **Meter Feeder** in Pittsburgh.

Supporting Pennsylvania nonprofits and local organizations

We know that organizations are already doing great work in Pennsylvania. That's why Google has partnered with trusted community institutions across the state to bring digital skills training, grant funding and other resources and services to more Pennsylvanians, including those historically underserved.

\$14M+

in grants to nonprofits and organizations based in Pennsylvania

Google.org has awarded over **\$14M** in grants to nonprofits and organizations based in Pennsylvania, including through the local [Google.org Impact Challenge Pittsburgh](#). This funding has helped organizations provide on-the-job training and resources to Pennsylvanians and to empower entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities to start and grow their businesses.

23K+ hours

volunteered to Pennsylvania nonprofits and organizations

Since 2005, Google employees based in Pittsburgh—with matching contributions from Google—have donated over **\$16M** in charitable giving to nonprofits. Google employees in Pennsylvania have also served **23K+ hours of volunteer and pro bono work** with local nonprofits and organizations.

\$17.52M

in Google Ad Grants to Pennsylvania nonprofits

[Google for Nonprofits](#) provides organizations across the U.S. with access to Google products and programs such as Google Workspace for Nonprofits, Google Ad Grants, YouTube, and Google Maps Platform. Since 2011, Google for Nonprofits has supported **6,900+ nonprofits** in Pennsylvania. In 2020, Google provided **\$17.52M in in-kind search advertising credit** to Pennsylvania nonprofits through the [Google Ad Grants](#) program.

Nearly 6,600

Pennsylvanians trained on critical digital skills

Grow with Google has **partnered with 300+ organizations** in the state to **train nearly 6,600 Pennsylvanians** on [digital skills](#), including public libraries, chambers of commerce, and more.

Wi-Fi

& Device Lending Program to Carnegie Library System for Pittsburgh residents

Google is proud to partner with Pittsburgh nonprofits and schools to increase access to technology, STEM education, and the internet, including organizations like **Carnegie Library, University of Pittsburgh, Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University, Homewood Children's Village, YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh, Sarah Heinz House**, and many others.

In 2018, Google provided **\$330K** to the Carnegie Library System to support a laptop and WiFi device lending program for Pittsburgh residents.