



Dr. Tamarah Holmes
Department of Housing and Community Development
600 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23229

Dear Dr. Holmes:

The Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP) commends the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Office of Broadband for a comprehensive process and statewide plan on digital opportunity. Many of the concerns of covered populations and the organizations that serve covered populations were addressed and we appreciated you listening intently. We represent the state's 31 community action agencies, and we particularly support the recommendation to have a flexible and sustainable grant program to meet the digital opportunity needs on a regional and local basis that is locally driven and builds sustainable capacity. This capacity building grant program is a key recommendation of VACAP and its Broadband Peer Group. VACAP's recommends that the Office of Broadband considers when crafting this grant program, a preference for organizations currently serving multiple covered populations, working regionally, and having low-income representation on their boards. This will enable you to quickly build upon the work of the regional digital opportunity plans and ensure connectivity across the multiple programs serving covered populations.

Additionally, VACAP supports the recommendation to allow flexibility for grantees to create targeted programs towards all covered populations especially low-income individuals of all ages with age specific programs for working adults, seniors, veterans, youth, and children, for incarcerated individuals, individuals with language barriers and individuals with disabilities. This was also a key recommendation of the VACAP Broadband peer group and was developed from surveys, focus groups and peer group meetings. VACAP suggests that organizations that are regionally focused and have a track record and complementary funding streams supporting these covered populations be targeted to deliver new grant funding and be given priority for this grant program.

VACAP does recommend that the DHCD Office of Broadband clarify a few items in the statewide digital opportunity plan:

- How the Department is addressing or recommends stakeholders address language barriers for covered populations
- Defining covered populations in the plan. Although the definitions exist in federal law, the term "covered population" is used without context in the report. It would be helpful for the slide from the input session highlighting and spelling out these covered populations to be added to the report.

VACAP is in support of DHCD Office of Broadband's current efforts on Digital Opportunity and looking forward to continued partnership with the agency to close the digital divide for all Virginians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erik C. Johnston".

Erik. C. Johnston
President and CEO
Virginia Community Action Partnership

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