

EXPERT OPINION

Liliana Aide Monge: AB 2279 Deserves a Floor Vote. California's Digital Divide Can't Wait

AB 2279 would restore the original scope of California's Regional Broadband Consortia and boost their funding using existing CPUC fee surpluses.



Liliana Aide Monge

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The author of this Expert Opinion is **Liliana Aide Monge**. Her bio is below.

In today's economy, access to reliable, affordable broadband is no longer a luxury. It is essential for education, employment, health care, small-business growth and civic participation. Yet millions of Californians, particularly those in low-income, rural, Tribal and other underserved communities, continue to face barriers to connectivity, device access and digital skills.



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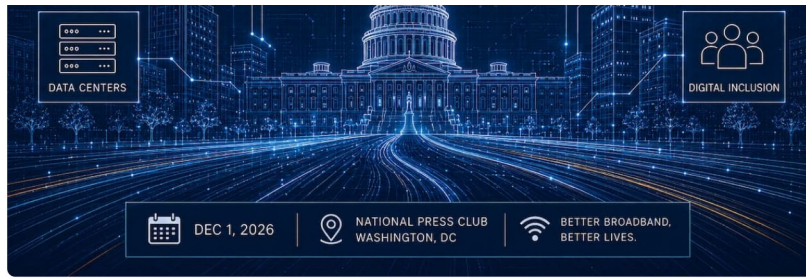
For more than a decade, California's Regional Broadband Consortia (RBCs) have played a critical role in closing that gap. Established through legislation authored in 2010 by then-state Sen. **Alex Padilla**, RBCs were designed to serve as the bridge between local communities and state policymakers.



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They bring together counties, cities, schools, community organizations, businesses, labor groups and internet service providers to identify needs, inform state broadband investments and help communities access available resources.

Their impact has been significant. Across California, RBCs have helped identify unserved and underserved areas, supported local broadband planning, expanded awareness of digital inclusion programs and connected communities to state funding opportunities. As California continues making historic investments in broadband infrastructure, the need for trusted regional partners that can help ensure those investments reach the people who need them most has only grown.

Unfortunately, changes made over the years have narrowed the role of RBCs and limited their ability to address the full range of digital divide challenges facing communities. At the same time, administrative burdens and funding constraints have made it harder for consortia to maximize their impact. Efforts to address those issues through a recent California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) proceeding resulted in only modest changes, leaving many concerns unresolved.

That is why Assemblymember **Mike Gipson** introduced AB 2279.

The bill would restore the original intent of the RBC program, modestly increase funding and provide the CPUC with direction to implement practical, common-sense regulations that allow consortia to better serve their communities.

The proposal has earned unanimous bipartisan support in both the Assembly and the Senate policy committee, a rare achievement in today's political climate. That support reflects a simple reality: AB 2279 is a practical solution that does not rely on taxpayer dollars or the state's General Fund. Existing fees collected by the

CPUC already support broadband programs and have generated a substantial surplus.

AB 2279 would allow a small portion of those existing resources to be invested in the local partnerships that help ensure broadband programs succeed.

The bill now awaits action by the Senate Appropriations Committee. With a critical deadline approaching, lawmakers have an opportunity to strengthen California's broadband ecosystem and accelerate progress toward digital equity.

California has made meaningful strides in expanding broadband access, but the work is far from complete. The digital divide continues to limit opportunity for too many residents. AB 2279 would strengthen one of the state's most effective tools for connecting local communities to broadband solutions and ensuring that no Californian is left behind.

We urge the Senate Appropriations Committee to advance AB 2279 and move the bill to the full Senate for consideration.

Liliana Aide Monge is a nationally recognized digital equity and workforce development leader dedicated to advancing equitable economic mobility across Los Angeles County and beyond. She currently serves as Director of Digital Equity at UNITE-LA, where she leads regional strategies to close the digital divide and expand broadband access, affordability, adoption and workforce pathways across all 88 cities and unincorporated communities in Los Angeles County. In her role at UNITE-LA, Monge directs digital equity initiatives that align infrastructure investment with education, workforce development and economic opportunity. Unite-LA is the convener of the Los Angeles Digital Equity Action League (LA DEAL), which serves as the Regional Broadband Consortia for the Los Angeles region. This Expert Opinion is exclusive to Broadband Breakfast.

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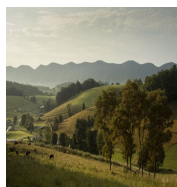
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