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AB-2750 Department of Technology: state digital equity plan. (2021-2022)

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Assembly Bill No. 2750

CHAPTER 597

An act to add Section 11546.46 to the Government Code, relating to state government.

[Approved by Governor September 27, 2022. Filed with Secretary of State September 27, 2022.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2750, Mia Bonta. Department of Technology: state digital equity plan.

Existing law establishes the Department of Technology within the Government Operations Agency, which is supervised by the Director of Technology. Existing law charges the director and the department with various duties in creating and managing the information technology policy of the state.

This bill would require the department, by January 1, 2024, in consultation with the public, the Public Utilities Commission, and the California Broadband Council, to develop a state digital equity plan. The bill would require the plan to include, among other things, the identification of barriers to digital equity faced by specified populations, including, among other barriers, the availability and affordability of access to fixed and wireless broadband technology. The bill would additionally require the plan to include measurable objectives for documenting and promoting digital equity among those populations and an assessment of existing digital navigator programs, as specified. The bill would require the department, to the extent practicable, to obtain all available federal funding for purposes of developing and implementing the plan.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) California's digital divide is a major 21st-century civil rights issue that perpetuates historic inequities. A high-speed internet connection and the attendant digital skills are critical to accessing vital services, as well as employment and educational opportunities.

(b) The principles of equity and need must guide the state's significant new investments in broadband infrastructure and digital literacy. A state digital equity plan will ensure these investments achieve their intended impact of closing the digital divide. A state plan ensures investments are strategic and help underserved populations not only gain access to fast, affordable, and reliable internet, but also receive the technical assistance, information technology support, and skills training needed to take advantage of the many opportunities afforded by high-speed internet.

(c) Investing in the human infrastructure to conduct outreach and provide technical assistance in underserved communities will be key to the success of these efforts. Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature that the state digital equity plan identify and offer

best-in-class digital navigator services to promote digital inclusion and literacy among covered populations, including through a California Connect Corps.

SEC. 2. Section 11546.46 is added to the Government Code, immediately following Section 11546.45, to read:

11546.46. (a) (1) By January 1, 2024, the Department of Technology, in consultation with the public, the Public Utilities Commission, and the California Broadband Council, shall develop a state digital equity plan.

(2) The Department of Technology, to the extent practicable, shall obtain all available federal funding for purposes of developing and implementing the state digital equity plan.

(b) The state digital equity plan shall include the following:

(1) The identification of barriers to digital equity faced by covered populations in this state. Barriers include, but are not limited to, the following:

(A) The availability and affordability of access to fixed and wireless broadband technology.

(B) Accessibility and inclusivity of online public resources and services.

(C) Digital literacy.

(D) Awareness and use of measures to secure the online privacy and cybersecurity of an individual.

(E) Availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support for those devices.

(2) Measurable objectives for documenting and promoting digital equity among covered populations located in the state.

(3) An assessment of how the objectives described will impact and interact with the following:

(A) Economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes of the state.

(B) Educational outcomes, including, but not limited to, digital equity barriers for individuals with learning disabilities and English learners.

(C) Health outcomes.

(D) Civic and social engagement.

(E) Delivery of other essential services.

(4) A description of how the department plans to collaborate with key stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the following:

(A) Community anchor institutions.

(B) Local governments.

(C) Local educational agencies.

(D) Native American tribes.

(E) Nonprofit organizations.

(F) Organizations that represent covered populations.

(G) Civil rights organizations.

(H) Entities that carry out workforce development programs.

(I) State and local agencies that are responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities.

(J) State and local public housing authorities.

(K) Internet service providers (ISPs).

(L) Digital navigator programs.

(M) Partnerships between any of the entities described in subparagraphs (A) through (L), inclusive.

(5) A list of organizations with which the department collaborated in developing and implementing the state digital equity plan.

(6) An assessment of existing digital navigator programs in the state and recommendations for a statewide strategy for digital navigators to serve covered populations, including opportunities to integrate with other social service outreach programs and opportunities for covered populations to participate as navigators with training they can then leverage to enter careers in the information technology sector.

(c) For purposes of this section:

(1) The definitions in Section 60302 of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58) apply unless otherwise specified in this section.

(2) "Consultation with the public" means soliciting and receiving policy recommendation letters from key stakeholders as listed in paragraph (4) of subdivision (b), soliciting and receiving public comment, and hosting public workshops and meetings.

(3) "Covered populations" means demographics that are underserved in regards to internet access and digital literacy, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(A) Households whose income is 150 percent of the federal poverty level or less for the prior calendar year.

(B) Individuals 60 years of age or older.

(C) Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a federal correctional facility.

(D) Veterans.

(E) Individuals with disabilities.

(F) Individuals with language barriers, such as English learners and individuals with low literacy levels.

(G) Members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

(H) Residents of rural areas.