

December 4, 2023

Mr. Greg Conte
Texas Broadband Office – Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

Dear Mr. Conte,

We want to extend our appreciation to you, and your dedicated team at the Texas Broadband Office (BDO), for your commitment to fostering public engagement and your strong desire to collaborate with stakeholders of all kinds as partners in the process. BDO's hard work and dedication to addressing broadband accessibility in Texas is a testament to their genuine dedication to bridging the digital divide in the Lone Star State.

However, there is one troubling aspect of BDO's draft initial proposal – its lack of including NTIA's Challenge Module to support Texans who live in multi-family dwelling units, or MDUs. **In El Paso County alone, 135,357 Texans live in 1,138 multi-family dwelling units (MDUs) that are eligible for BEAD funding. In a study conducted by our local university institution, research collected via direct crowdsourcing indicated 56.7% broadband connectivity. This is in sharp contrast to the 96.8% figure reported by the FCC.** Texas is one of just eight to have not included the Challenge Module – and of those eight states, Texas has by far the most residents who live in MDUs. In addition, our comparable and neighboring states of Florida, Louisiana, and Oklahoma all included it.

We are eager to hear how BDO will adjust its plan to ensure *all* Texans are served, **not just Texans who live in single-family homes**. Examples of what the BDO could do to achieve this include:

- Only accept as permissible rebuttals from service providers to availability challenges *customer bills* demonstrating they actually serve a household in the MDU.
- Emphasis on last-mile solutions that connect *all units* of a Broadband Serviceable Location (BSL) that is an MDU, not just a pass-by connection to the leasing office that does not serve families.
- Include in its Selection Criteria points that recognize **cost per unit connected**, not just cost per pass-by, for BSLs that are MDUs.

We gently remind BDO that NTIA acknowledges that the National Broadband Map has a significant shortcoming in that it counts each MDU as one BSL. This shortcoming is explicitly acknowledged in the BEAD NOFO on Page 7, where they recommend "deployment of Wi-Fi service within multi-family buildings" as a connectivity solution. **We have provided a copy of a report commissioned by El Paso County that communicates the broadband gaps in the region conducted by the University of Texas at El Paso.** This robust research report will also corroborate the shortcomings. We trust BDO will make good use of our tax dollars to connect **all** Texans.

Sincerely,

El Paso County