

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 6, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

We strongly object to May 9, 2025, termination of Digital Equity Act (DEA) funding and request that the U.S. Department of Commerce reinstate this funding immediately.

Under the Constitution, Congress makes spending decisions.

Congress recognized that broadband access and digital literacy are increasingly critical for employment, education, healthcare and participation in the broader economy. Accordingly, in a bipartisan manner, Congress provided \$2.75 billion for the states to help ensure that all households have the technology, skills and capacity to access and benefit from the digital economy. Illinois has been awarded \$23.7 million through the Digital Equity Capacity Grant, and organizations working throughout our State have also been awarded grant funds for multi-state Digital Equity Competitive Grant projects.

This is not a, “woke handout based on race[.]”¹ This is help for households with the highest need based on historic and ongoing barriers to getting online, such as living in a rural area. This not only includes racial and ethnic minorities, but also, Veterans, people with disabilities, rural residents and older adults (ages 60 years or older).² Nearly 80% of Illinois residents belong to at least one of the categories of individuals the law is designed to assist.

Without these funds, programs that help job seekers create a resume to apply for jobs, help farmers use data to optimize crop and livestock production, help seniors pay their bills online and speak with their healthcare providers and help entrepreneurs to develop a website would be slashed.

Additionally, investments in digital skill building and device access generates a significant return on investment for Americans and U.S. businesses. According to a report from the National Skills Coalition, people who qualify for jobs that require at least one digital skill earn, on average, 23% more than those working in jobs that require none. This represents an increase of \$8,000 per year for an individual worker. The impact on wages is even higher for jobs that require more digital skills.³ Businesses that can hire job seekers with more skills up front must therefore invest less in upskilling them.

We urge you to reverse course and reinstate this critical funding.

¹ President Trump (@realDonaldTrump). (2025, May 8). I have spoken with my wonderful Secretary of Commerce, Howard Lutnick, and we agree that the Biden/Harris so-called “Digital Equity...”. Retrieved from: <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114474136573150113>

² U.S. Congress. (2021). Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Public Law No. 117-58, § 60301 (Digital Equity Act), 135 Stat. 429, 781. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ58/PLAW-117publ58.pdf>

³ National Skills Coalition (2023). *Closing the Digital Skills Divide: The Payoff for Workers, Business, and the Economy*. Retrieved from: https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NSC-DigitalDivide_report_Feb2023.pdf

Sincerely,



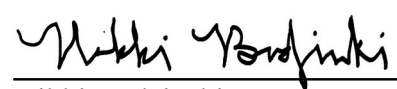
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



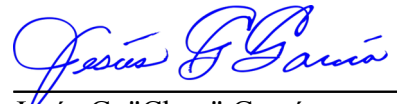
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



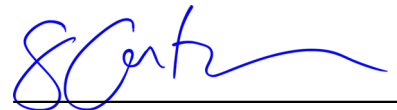
Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress



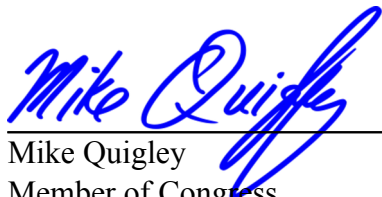
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
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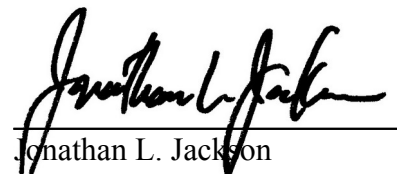
Delia C. Ramirez
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Bradley Scott Schneider
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Bill Foster
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Jonathan L. Jackson
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