



THE MICHELSON 20MM
FOUNDATION

“The Power of Advocacy: How Nonprofits Are Shaping Broadband Policy In California”

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SPEAKERS

Miguel Leon, Efrain Escobedo, Ana Teresa Dahan, Cindy Chavez, Gabriela Sandoval, Gary Michelson, Alexis Villanueva, Elmer Roldan

Miguel Leon 00:01

I'm a Latinx male with black hair comb to the side, brown eyes, black rimmed glasses, I'm wearing a white button shirt with tiny red and black accents and a charcoal gray coat. Before we get started with today's discussion, I would like to share a bit about the foundation. Funded by Dr. Gary K. Michelson and Alya Michelson, the Michelson 20MM Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that everyone, particularly our most vulnerable populations, has access to the equitable post secondary educational opportunities that lead to meaningful careers. Our Connected California series is but one example of a project that launched 18 months ago as part of our digital equity initiative to increase awareness of the digital divide and opportunities to close it. The series has hosted seven events zeroing in on various themes, including the history and root causes of digital inequity. The role that race plays in digital inequity, and even uplifted exemplars of public private partnerships whose cross sectoral efforts are making a difference for communities and people in need. Today, we highlight the role that nonprofit organizations are playing in shaping broadband policy in our state. These leaders and trusted advocates have not only grappled with the nuances of a complex, multifaceted issue, but also they are leading the charge to ensure that their communities never again are redlined, excluded and forgotten. Before we begin the discussion, Dr. Gary Michelson founder and co chair Michelson 20MM Foundation and the Michelson Center for Public Policy will share remarks. I want to introduce our keynote speaker. Dr. Michelson.

Gary Michelson 02:23

Good morning and thank you for joining us for the latest installment in our ongoing Connecting California series. I am particularly proud to share this stage today with a group of committed equity champions who are leading the charge in this asymmetric battle against the Goliath ISPs that continue to prioritize profits over people. In today's conversation, you will hear from grassroots leaders who have stood against private industry, held policymakers accountable and secured tremendous victories for their communities. Please take their stories and their lessons learned on the way to success back with you to help you with your own work. It is now my honor to present one of our most fearless allies in the fight for digital equity, Cindy Chavez, supervisor for the second district of Santa Clara County, a tireless digital equity champion. She's an example of how elected officials can drive the change needed to eradicate digital inequity at the local level. Supervisor Chavez, thank you so much for joining us.

Cindy Chavez 03:08

Good morning, everyone. I am delighted to be with you today. And I'd like to thank Dr. Michelson and the Michelson 20MM Foundation for inviting me to speak today. I'm so proud to be part of this series, Connecting California: Solving the Digital Divide. Since 2020, it's provided a platform for important conversations around bridging the digital divide and ensuring that it is done equitably. My name is Cindy Chavez. I'm a member of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. I represent the Downtown Eastside and the southeast side of San Jose here in the heart of Silicon Valley. 73,000 Santa Clara County residents do not have access to the internet at speeds necessary to do a Zoom, take an online class or have a telemedicine appointment. More than 70,000 people here in the heart of Silicon Valley have no internet access at all. This is the unserved population. The underserved population is even larger, more than 680,000 County residents only have one provider where they can get a reliable internet service at modern speeds. Almost 1/3 of the population in the largest county in Northern California is at the mercy of one monopoly. Historically, that means higher prices and worse service. SB 156 dedicates \$6 billion to close the digital divide statewide, including 3.2 billion to build a statewide Open Access middle mile network along the state highway system, making it easier and more affordable for local government entities to provide a public option for Internet service. That's why the County of Santa Clara is planning that right now, myself and one of my colleagues, Supervisor Ellenberg, have brought this idea to the Board of Supervisors. If the private sector ISPs were going to close the digital divide, they would have done it already at some point in the last 25 years. We hope to be a model for a municipally owned Internet Service Provider just like Chattanooga, Tennessee. In 2009 Chattanooga opened fiber optic internet services serving more than 360,000 residents. During the first decade of service, nearly 10,000 jobs have been saved or created and more than \$1.4 billion of investment and development and tax revenue were brought to the region as a result of its existence. I want to say a very special thank you to all of you who joined the statewide push to make sure that that \$6 billion was available and we have the right laws and resources in place that allow local governments to play a leadership role in making sure that we can make that everybody has access to the internet. I want to thank all of the nonprofit leaders who played an incredible role in being advocates for making that kind of change. I particularly want to thank the Michelson 20MM Foundation, the California Community Foundation, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Southern California Grant Makers and all the other partners who made this possible. The best time to close the digital divide was 25 years ago. The next best time is today. Keep up the great work I'm so proud to work with all of you on this. I know that we're going to see change and in the near future and I'm so excited about what it will mean for every Californian. Thank you

Miguel Leon 06:52

Thank you, Supervisor Chavez for your leadership on this issue, for your innovative ideas and working to resolve it, and for being a prime example of how local leaders can drive positive social change. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with you in the service of Santa Clara residents and all Californians. It's now my pleasure to introduce our incredible panel with us to tell the story of nonprofit advocacy in the digital equity space. We have Ana Teresa Dahan, senior director of policy advocacy and communications at Great Public Schools Now. Ana Teresa Dahan has two decades of experience in LA local government education, nonprofit management and politics and has worked at all levels of management at LAUSD. She previously served on the city of Los Angeles Ethics Commission, and has also served on the city of Los Angeles. Commission on the Status of Women and the 2021 LAUSD redistricting commission. Welcome Ana Teresa Dahan. We are also joined by Elmer Roldan, Executive Director at Communities in Schools of Los Angeles. Elmer joined CISLA in November 2019 bringing with him 23 years of Youth and Community Organizing experience and marking a new era of leadership at the organization. Prior to joining CISLA, Elmer served as Director of civic engagement in the Office of the Superintendent in LAUSD and is director of education programs and policy at the United Way of greater LA. His experience includes work and advocating for positive alternatives to punitive school discipline and reducing criminalization in communities of color, efforts that he led for over a decade in South LA as a youth

organizer, fundraising manager and director of education programs at the community coalition. Welcome Elmer. Also with us is Gabriela Sandoval, the director of race and equity policy at the Utility Reform Network, also known as TURN. At TURN Gabriela works with community based organizations throughout the state, with a focus on communities struggling to make ends meet and communities of color. TURN seeks to build coalitions to improve broadband equity and access, increase energy equity and security and to protect consumer privacy. Before joining TURN, Gabriela was research director at the Insight Center for Community Economic Development, a national Think and Do tank in Oakland, where the focus of her work was the closing the racial wealth gap initiative. Previously, Gabriela was a faculty member of the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the Academic Coordinator for the first professional midwifery school in Mexico. Welcome Gabriela Next we have Alexis Villanueva, economic development director at the City Heights Community Development Corporation, a graduate of San Diego State University with majors in social work and Chicana/Chicano Studies, Alexis has practiced social work for 10 years working with children and families with an emphasis on adolescents in foster care. At the City Heights, CDC Nabila oversees initiatives that are focused on micro enterprise, business development, Recovery and Resiliency efforts and policies that directly impact communities that are economically redlined and oppressed. She also leads a team of business advisors that help entrepreneurs in City Heights of predominantly immigrant and refugee community carry on their dreams of starting a business. Welcome, Alexis. Last but not least, moderating our panel today is Efrain Escobedo, Vice President of Public Policy and Civic Engagement at the California Community Foundation. Efrain is recognized statewide as a leading executive strategist dedicated to increasing the civic engagement of historically underserved and marginalized communities. For nearly two decades he has worked within the philanthropic, government and nonprofit sectors. Before joining CCF Efrain has held leadership positions at the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder county clerk where he spearheaded historic projects like the voting systems assessment project, which modernized the county's voting systems. Efrain also served as Senior Director of civic engagement and at NALEO Educational Fund, where he helped lead the historic Ya Es Hora campaign, which helped to naturalize more than 1 million immigrants in the US and contributed to historic Latino voter turnout in 2008. Efrain, gracias for your leadership and your presence today. The mic is yours.

Efrain Escobedo 11:32

Thank you, Miguel. And what a tremendous honor to be amongst such great leaders in the community and really at the vanguard of advancing a new area of digital equity in California and I think as California often does, inspiring the rest of the country as well. And as Supervisor Chavez said in her opening remarks, there is an opportunity now, we failed to do it 25 years ago, but we are a much different state than 25 years ago. We've undone a lot of the vestiges that created inequities like Prop 187, we've continued to fight and advance more equitable inclusion of our communities and have shaped what the legislature and the governor's office looks like. And all through the power of advocacy and community engagement. And I think I'm most excited about this panel because we will have an opportunity in real time to hear how we are advancing digital equity from the ground up. As we heard from Dr. Michelson and others, there are historic investments being made in California by our policymakers and that is tremendous. But in order to advance equitable outcomes for those policy wins, it is always critical that the voices of those most effected, both unserved and underserved lead the charge and really drive the changes that need to happen and what we're hearing from our panel is how that community grassroots centered movement is helping to now realize the promise that some of the policy wins that we all were very excited about this past year, lead to real equitable outcomes. And so with that, we'll dive right in to the conversation. We'll hear from each of our panelists share more about their work, and after an initial round of conversation with them, we'll open it up and encourage participants to chime in in the chat, ask some questions and we'll open it up and take some of those questions to really dive into a dialogue around the issue of building the advocacy around digital equity movement in California. And so Gabriela, I

want to start with you. Thank you for joining us and giving us some of your time and for the amazing work that TURN has been doing and not having led up for many years and decades to continue to raise the issues around how equity in our broadband systems is not meeting the needs of our highest need communities. And so seeing this unprecedented action in the legislature in California government, at localities, hearing from Supervisor Chavez, there is also a growing movement around nonprofits particularly community organizations to raise their voice and really demand for more systems change and equitable outcomes around broadband access and use. And so, with TURN having been such a steadfast advocate in this space, talk to us about how you're seeing an expansion of the movement calling for digital equity, the types of community organizations and what TURN is doing to sort of help support and bring in some of these organizations who maybe are not directly oriented towards digital advocacy, but certainly have now brought community voice to this fight.

Gabriela Sandoval 15:26

Thank you Efrain. And thank you to the Michelson 20MM foundation for having us, it's quite an honor to be here with you all today. So TURN, the Utility Reform Network, has been around for almost 50 years. We're getting ready to celebrate our 50th anniversary next year. And so we've been working in the telecommunications space since well before broadband and the Internet were even an issue. We work at the level of the California Public Utilities Commission. So we have a legal team who advocates on behalf of California consumers at the Public Utilities Commission. And we also do work at the legislative level. So part of what we've seen with the onset of the global COVID 19 pandemic was that a lot of our partners and a lot of organizations who were not yet our partners, were by force turned into advocates for broadband equity, for digital equity in the state, because all of a sudden, everyone needed internet access. And it really laid bare the needs of communities that had been affected by this digital divide that we really should have closed decades ago. And so we found ourselves in this tricky position of being an organization that had a lot of technical expertise, especially in the area of deployment. So there is a very common sense conversation that takes place. I'll share with you a story about a woman named Elizabeth who lives in Fresno we had an opportunity to talk with her in the midst of her children sheltering in place, she has four kids, she and her husband, have four kids and the six of them live in a mobile home park in Fresno and what they experienced when the shelter-in-place orders went into effect was that her kids, all of a sudden, all four of them required internet access, and her community does not have reliable internet access, nor did the service that she had paid for before, which was pretty spotty to begin with, it couldn't handle four children online at the same time to attend school. So what some of the trade offs that she had to make included driving all of the kids to a Starbucks, to a McDonald's, to the school grounds so that the kids could from the car attend virtual school. In addition to this, she shared with us that she often had to miss work when her kids had to take a test online, because the internet service wasn't reliable enough, and so she would upgrade temporarily her telephone so that she could use it as a hotspot so that her kids could actually access the internet to take exams. Now, as you can imagine, this causes a lot of stress for a lot of people. We've also talked to people who are unemployed, who didn't have the luxury of taking time away from work, or who didn't have access to the internet because they were trying to find work and they're trying to find work online and they just they don't have access. There isn't a reliable service. And so one of the things that we work on at TURN is advocating with respect to reliable, safe and affordable utility service in the state of California for everyone. And so really, this has created a huge opening, a huge opportunity for organizations, like many of the organizations that my esteemed co-panelists work for, who maybe broadband advocacy was not at the top of their priority list prior to the pandemic. But again, the pandemic forced a lot of new organizations to really take a stand on this issue. And so I just want to end by saying that TURN holds a kind of unique position because we do provide technical assistance to organizations who've never advocated at the California Public Utilities Commission. I mean, let's be honest, most people on the street if I went up to them and asked them who the California Public Utilities Commission is and what they do, they probably wouldn't know. But this has really created an opening that

has allowed us to provide technical assistance to organizations to teach organizations how to come to the PUC and advocate on behalf of their communities. And with the huge influx of funds because there are more than \$6 billion right now that the public utilities commission is debating upon how these funds will be distributed. We don't want business as usual. We don't want the same situation that left so many of our communities behind 25 years ago, we know that if we do not center equity, and especially racial equity, now, then this opportunity will get away from us and so that's why this conversation is so critical.

Efrain Escobedo 21:14

Well, I wonder if just very quickly on that last point. You all have been around for almost half a century. Looking back 25 years ago, and at the moment now. You mentioned there's a lot of organizations who maybe have not worked on this issue before but are now stepping up and advocating one, how impactful is that now and how is this movement growing now different than what maybe was or was not in place 25 years?

Gabriela Sandoval 21:48

I think obviously, there is an increase a heightened awareness. 25 years ago, maybe we thought internet as a luxury. But now, broadband access is a basic human need. So many of our basic necessities are moving on to an online platforms. Some of the people most impacted by this conversation don't have access to this conversation. And so that is a very critical point, a very critical shift that took place over the last 25 years. Recognizing that this is no longer that there was a transformation at some point we hit a tipping point. People can't access health care in the same way that they can if they have access to internet, they can access economic development opportunities, employment, education, and in some level, this is kind of like the entry level way that we now engage in especially in the context of an ongoing public health crisis. So I think, there was this very important shift over the last 25 years. But in addition, you mentioned it yourself, our state has really shifted in terms of its many of its political leanings. And so I think we have a very critical opportunity not only because the role of broadband has shifted, but because the hearts and minds of so many people in the state have shifted to recognize that digital discrimination is simply not okay. And we have to do something to address it.

Efrain Escobedo 23:30

Thank you. Thank you for that perspective, Gabriela. Ana Teresa, I want to want to go to you and and really build out this conversation. So as we start to think about a couple of things that Gabriela said, one is organizations who had maybe not worked on this issue before now see, it's central to their organizing work, but I'm just going to be really real, right? You're doing organizing and you are trying to talk about upload, download speeds, metal mile, dark fiber, all these things, while folks impacted at the same time are dealing with economic fallout of the pandemic. With issues around education, equity and their children and what's happening, one, what have been the ways to engage organizations really do that? And then the second piece that I'd like for you to talk to about is we're talking a lot about these monumental policy wins. But we all know that the devils in implementation, and and that happens at the local level. So wondering if you could talk about the work of organizing the organizers that Greater Public Schools Now has been helping to lead in LA County. Give us some, some when some anecdotes that show this is how local community org advocacy is actually driving the implementation.

Ana Teresa Dahan 25:04

Yes, thank you. Great Public Schools Now as our name suggests, is not a digital advocacy origin story, we actually focus exclusively on education issues in Los Angeles, particularly at LAUSD. And as you shared we like to think of ourselves as organizing the organizers. We're a funder, an activator and an amplifier. And we work with nonprofit organizations to collectively take action together to improve public education in Los Angeles. But then as Gabriela shared, the pandemic hit, and all of a sudden education

went online, but a lot of students did not get to go online. And so our organization first started with a pandemic response to kind of meet the basic needs of folks which is through our One Family LA initiative where we were this fundraising money to give direct relief to families and we had convened, at that time about 30 organizations to do that. Once federal and state funding and other sources of financial relief became available to families, the next big crisis was this digital divide that it was very apparent. We had a lot of similar stories of families who were going to public places to try to access Wi Fi were leveraging their cell phones, even those that were given hotspots lived in areas that were still dead zones, even with a hotspot, lack of digital literacy, just all of the challenges that we've all learned about over the last two years. And as a result, the organizations we engaged turned to digital equity advocacy, and started by submitting letters to our school board, the city council and the county saying 'you each have a role to play in this at minimum, when you're dealing with service providers asked for data. We need data so that we're able to advocate for solutions that actually meet the needs of community.' We asked us for these public government entities to leverage their Wi Fi sources that they have. So open it up and create public Wi Fi using the infrastructures that schools, public libraries and other county facilities have available to them. And third, being an advocate with us, use your power and your voice in our legislative system to also demand for digital equity in your relations with the state, internet service providers and the federal government. And what we learn really quickly. We're so thankful that organizations like TURN exist because none of us are experts on the technicalities of this. Many of us have become experts on how the impact impacts our communities, particularly our Black and Latino and low income communities. But understanding the technicalities is challenging. And so the role that we've played is to try to be, when we say we organized organizers, it's providing the support to these nonprofits that are also taking on other major issues at the same time and helping them, we staff them so that they have the talking points, so that they have the social media kits necessary to engage online. We sourced stories from them so that we can do communications in earned media to amplify what's happening. And I think what we really learned has been important, and I'll talk about some more recent work but I also want to say that this story of going to public places or private restaurants to get Wi Fi just because schools have reopened didn't make the digital inequities go away. I can tell you a story of a family who went to Chick-fil-A that for whatever reason decided they're no longer taking cash and that you could only pay with your cell phone, if you have internet on it and you have uploaded a credit card. And this family literally could not eat at the Chick-fil-A because they didn't have a phone that had internet and even if they would have had a phone to have internet, a lot of families don't understand the process of accessing a credit card and then getting that credit card on the phone so that you can use it in a wireless way. And so just because our schools have reopened doesn't mean that families and children are still not being impacted. We see it with accessing vaccinations. We see it with accessing COVID testing that's required at our schools. You have to be able to upload results and/or find testing centers. The pandemic may still go away but you need the Internet to be able to apply for college and for financial aid. If you're a family member looking for a job or trying to access public benefits, even if you're trying to get access to the federal government internet subsidies that exists for families, you have to have access to the internet or a cell phone and you have to have time to go through a process to access those benefits. And so our work has not gone away just because schools have reopened we realize that many of the inequities that we are trying to face in education are just made worse when people don't have access to the internet. And also there's a lot of communities that have experienced really, really difficult hardships and are very, very hesitant to get back in person. So even for advocacy work in organizing engaging families on education issues, we've had to figure out ways to do this online. And so for those reasons digital equity is a major concern to us and the 60 organizations that we convene in Los Angeles County. You asked about what it looks like to do implementation. And so I think this is really at the core of what we all need to be focused on. Especially as nonprofit advocates, we're so used to chasing the whim, getting the wind on the board and moving on to the next issue. And then we wake up 5, 10, 25 years later and say wait a moment, how come that didn't happen? And that's because we took our foot off the gas. And we went in a new lane, got in a different

car. And we didn't hold our governments, our leaders accountable for actually implementing those policy wins. And so through the help of CCF, we've been able to work locally to make sure that the funds that have been allocated at the state level or at the federal government are actually getting implemented locally in a way that solutions match the public need and actually address digital inequity. So an example would be at the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. We have been very active in participating not only in County Supervisor meetings, but also any kind of staff public meetings that they have, not just to continue to voice demand and to get wins like a community Wi Fi pilot that they are in the process of implementing, but we're still showing up at all of those meetings to make sure that they know we haven't gotten away and to also celebrate the work that they're doing. Nothing motivates people more than actually recognition and so there's a lot to be had not to just be focused on demands and lifting the pitchforks but also being there to clap and acknowledge that they're doing a lot of work and that we are in this with them and we're not going anywhere. It is all about the details. And so the last thing I'll say is this is a great opportunity for nonprofit organizations like ours to realize we don't always have to be the expert, but there's power in the collective and how are we leveraging our collective knowledge, resources, people to make impact? And this is an opportunity for us to, those who are greater turning out people partner with those who know what the message and the technicalities are, those who know how to be effective online and develop social media kits and get that message out need to partner with the people who have a lot of people are going to be able to use that social media kit and that is how we're going to win this, no one entity, no one person is going to tackle it, plus many more of us and so the faster and quicker we learn to leverage each other's assets and commitment and values towards addressing this issue, the better off you will be and the faster we'll get to getting the solution because I can tell you the other side is very, very well resourced. They're all working together in tandem and in lockstep whether you're AT&T, Verizon, they're all coordinating and talking to each other and we need to be doing the same.

Efrain Escobedo 33:53

Thanks for sharing that. And yes, absolutely. It is certainly not simply about advocating for the need. It's understanding that there is an opposition to some of the solutions of those needs. So thank you for raising that. We've heard a lot about the great work that you all are doing and I recognize we're talking about LA County, this is a statewide movement. I want to turn out to Alexis, our sister further south. Alexis if you could talk about something that Ana Teresa really queued up, which was it's gonna take the collective power of all of the different folks that define the community to make this happen. In other words, we got to work in coalitions. And we got to work together towards the system change we want to see. In the work that City Heights has been doing, can you talk about what that coalition building is looking like to really drive change in your area, to say, what is it taking to move the needle in the way that LA is doing, for you all it's got to look different in every place. So Alexis, want to turn it over to you to talk a little bit about what that coalition building work is looking like, who are the stakeholders and what are you all inventing?

Alexis Villanueva 35:18

Perfect, thank you. Thank you to the Michelson Foundation for having us here and among all these speakers who just bring tremendous knowledge and also pushing these conversations. There's no time like now that these come up and we're continuing to have them. So for our City Heights, CDC our Community Development Corporation, we're 40 year old organization. Coalition building is in our blood. So we actually mobilized, we were creation of mobilization, of a highway cutting through our community, City Heights. So we are actually a organization that was developed from that community building, community mobilization and we just stayed. So now a lot of the issues that we directly put energy to are all of the issues the community comes to us and says this is what we need help them doing. And so for the past 40 years, it's been something like having highways come through the middle of a community and affect health, affect education. But also when we're thinking about economic development, we're a community of primarily immigrant or refugee, English language speakers. We speak over I think 56

languages now, we're a high density area. We're talking about 100,000 folks, and a really small community. A lot of our issues and economic development are focused on sustainability, ACT certification, access to small business development, newly because of COVID access to health care. Part of the the coalition building that started and to your point Efrain, our landscape is a little bit different than than the Los Angeles landscape. When COVID happened, City Heights felt like time just stood still. Everything went immediately online, and we're talking about for businesses, grant applications, any information on regulations, any information on how staff need to seek help, everything went online in that area, for health care, all the vaccinations, all the equipment shut down, and all the ways that you can make appointments were online and our community is heavily supported by clinics. And then for education, education went immediately online and they were handing out hardware and Chromebooks and Wi Fi hotspots but not giving instructions on how to do any of that. And they didn't do that until months after. So there was plenty of children that weren't online. And then also all government services went online. And so, when we're thinking about communities that tend to be in the lower to middle income, a lot of their services are accessed online or through government buildings, and they immediately closed down. So when I say time stopped, not only was it a ghost town when you walked into your communities because everybody was sheltering in place, but literally, no one knew how to access internet. No one knew what was happening. There was a tremendous amount of fear. And we also wanted to consider because we're such a community of immigrant refugees, we had a large number of undocumented individuals for whom this was probably the worst thing that could happen because they had no direction, there was nowhere to go, there was no way to seek help. And so immediately, the coalition building started around, first our businesses, who in our community, our residents, most of our businesses are lower to middle income. For the lack of workhorse opportunities, many of them resorted to starting small businesses. So we're not talking about businesses that are making million dollars revenue. We're talking about businesses that barely make it. So immediately our businesses were concerned if they were going to keep their storefronts. So how could we start building around, what can we do to help them survive? We are heavily service dependent community. So their jobs were wiped away immediately. How did they access unemployment because that was online. And if any of those individuals who you were serving had to access unemployment, the number was out of reach for the longest time. And so all of your answers were online. So we enlisted a collaborative, we have an economic development collaborative in City Heights that consists of about 60 organizations who are dedicated to economic development in City Heights. We enlisted those individuals to start fundraising around small business, but then also enlisted a group of [unintelligible]. And I will say this over and over, [unintelligible] are our connectors to the communities. That's a model that that I think, because of COVID, people have jumped on that. But our [unintelligible] went out there and their main job was to talk about COVID and the impacts of COVID and how to access vaccines. But our [unintelligible] are our wraparound services. So they're not just talking about COVID outrage. They're talking about small business development brands. They're talking about how do you get online. [Unintelligible] are great, they have WhatsApp and they're teaching individuals how to use whatsapp and how to text where these food banks are. And so again, to your point, I think it was a matter one of education. Where can we get everybody in one space and we had to do this in person. I'll be 100% honest, all of our business advisors, all of our our programs, when everybody went remote, we stayed in the community. We made sure that our community, that our staff were safe, but we knew that we weren't going to reach our community members going online and trying to access online services. So that meant that we were more community navigators. So we did business walks, and then we did education walks, our [unintelligible] were out there handing out PPE, PPE to businesses. And honestly just being one of those quote unquote first responders out there and just speaking to some of the fears that were happening. We managed to get individuals interested in what we were attempting to do, and what we were hoping to do in policy. I will say real quickly San Diego's landscape but when it comes to policy least at the city level, we're strong there. So that means a whole lot of things, but for us, that means that the mayor has to be on board with some of these concerns in specific districts. And he has to see it as a priority and I say he because our mayor's

currently male and digital equity was not at our forefront. It was not at the top of our list, but immediately when time stood still that it had to be at the top of our list. And so the immediate city response was Wi Fi hotspots, and to get real answers to some of the things they touched on infrastructure that isn't in place in San Diego and all the regions and I want to be clear about this, when we talk about the issue, We understand that we're all in tribal communities are suffering as well, with no connectivity. But it is absolutely unacceptable that our urban communities are suffering just as much and we're having an expectation that they still play a participant in our democracy and our economic system. And to me it's smoke and mirrors because that's saying that there's ability to do that, but we know that there's not, especially when we're talking about Wi Fi infrastructure, or internet infrastructure, so we started with Wi Fi hotspots, I think there was a couple in City Heights at a McDonald's, definitely at the library. But I also found that unacceptable to tell families in more affluent communities, Please stay safe in your homes, shelter in place, but your community please leave your home, not shelter in place, go to a library that's not open but feel free to stick around in the parking lot and use that Wi Fi hotspot. So it was hurtful, it was harmful to our community. And it just motivated us to continue to push further. So this year, we decided to play a part in the budget process. And Julie's put it in a letter to policymakers. That's a little bit different than lobbying because we will look at what that looks like but just to play a part in the budget process, understanding where our money goes, and saying that digital equity is great and you want to put Wi Fi that's fine, but where's the infrastructure? Where's the money towards infrastructure? Where's the money towards broadband? Where's the money that should be designated towards our district? And to be honest, that's engaged a greater conversation in our community. And we're hoping to do a community broadband pilot really soon. And I will say this confidently without the support of the city and without the support of the county and I say that because we know that the mobilization of the community, we know that the power and the community is going to come forward and push this forward. And the result will be that our community will be connected. And then we can have that data to show this is an issue. This is where we need to stand up and say that this committee deserves this. And again, there's many committees in San Diego that this is the case of and I want to be clear about that. That's not City Heights. This happens all over the state. But in San Diego, there's many communities, they're trying to understand that, we're trying to educate more on what infrastructure looks like, the cost, the idea that there's sustainability and broadband. And we don't look at those models because we don't want to look at those models because our friends are ISP providers. So anyway, that's I can go on and on about that. But I hope that gives a little bit of context.

Efrain Escobedo 44:27

It does and really, really appreciate that Alexis, and we've got your back and more power to community and in moving forward and envisioning things like community broadband even if the city and county don't yet have that vision and movement. I know there was a question in the chat and just want to quickly hit on it and anyone in our panelists feel free to correct me but there's a question asking about promotoras maybe there's a little bit more to explain who are promotoras and I'll just quickly share because I want to move on to Elmer is promotoras can also be thought of as community navigators, sort of these credible messengers that are from and within community that have strong connection, credibility with community that helped with a lot of navigation. We heard Alexis give the examples of that, connecting to resources, directly providing information that is often crucial in our work, they're also referred to as for promotora models. They're out promoting and providing information. Elmer, I want to turn to you because we've talked a lot about and Ana Teresa talked about it as well. Alexis did a great job of visualizing it. And that is sort of on this issue, what is the direct organizing look like? Communities in school also, like many of us here was not in the business of advancing digital literacy or equity. It became a need, we've all heard that. But then what is the organizing look like? I know the immediate need was, I need hotspots and devices and a lot of us work collectively to address that. But how have you evolved that to now do organizing that starts to address the systemic issues and infrastructure part?

Elmer Roldan 46:26

Yeah. Thank you for that. You took a lot of the points that I wanted to make and that is that an organization like ours we have 15 years of experience in providing direct engagement with LAUSD students via case management. Our work spans five communities at 14 different schools. In a traditional year we serve about 12,500 students. And during the pandemic we provided 900 with intensive social support as well as financial support. And it was through that foundation that we were able to pull families in when the onset of the pandemic at a time when many, many institutions closed their doors. As you know, the pandemic began to shut down society and the fact that CISLA is having this conversation about internet equity tells you that California has a broadband problem. This is not our area of expertise. If you would have asked me two years ago if this would have become one of the central topics for advocacy, I would have said no, that's just not an area that we understand or know how to navigate nor is it our area of expertise and like you said, our work in this started very basic and that is that from day one of the pandemic shutting down schools, we started to distribute food and hygiene supplies to our families. And then we progressed to distributing noise cancelling headphones because we wanted to help students reduce the noise in crowded homes, help them get more privacy and focus as Zoom became the mode for taking in education. And then it evolved into getting devices in the hands of students, helping families navigate the free or low cost packages that were being made available. But we tried the free packages and we hit walls, where we saw that they were actually not free. We tried the paid internet and we hit walls. We actually have a case where in wide we got a donor who wanted to pay for the Internet of families for a whole year. So we helped two different families from the same middle school try to get an internet package in their community. The kids live two blocks away from one another, literally two blocks. We did the distance. One kid was being offered a package at \$65, that was the most affordable package that they could get. And they actually got like you know pretty decent internet speeds. The other kid got offer the exact same package, the exact same price for only a fifth of the internet. He couldn't even login to the Zoom class with a video on because his system would shut down, let alone be able to do other things like navigate Netflix and things like that. So I bring all of that because. What slowly surfaced was that we needed to understand why it was so difficult that in a place like Los Angeles, which is a major urban city, we knew that in rural communities, the infrastructure wasn't there. But how is it possible that in Los Angeles, where families were less than a mile away from the central hub of where the the Western Hemisphere gets its internet, kids in South Central and Watts and Boyle Heights weren't able to access their own schoolwork because they didn't have enough internet. First is the shock. I think that's the first thing that brings us into this space was the fact that we wanted to help families and we felt the desperation for them. Because, if we who are a little bit more computer illiterate and internet literate, we're having trouble navigating the spaces, you can only imagine the level of frustration and helplessness that our families were facing, especially those who didn't have a computer at home, who felt intimidated by even turning on a computer, let alone navigating internet service provider, customer support specialists who in some cases were giving our families very rude responses after they reached out to ask for help. The fact that the pandemic elevated the economic and education inequities for students in Los Angeles is something that we have to hold on to. What it taught an organization like ours was that direct service wasn't going to be enough, that we know that we can help 1000 families but the reality is that the problem was much bigger and so we needed to engage and that's where we launched our own organizational wide initiative, focusing on elevating the fact that this is this is a problem, It starts with that, it's ringing the alarm and saying, Hey, folks, we have a problem. Hey, city leaders, we have a problem. So we started to engage folks at the city level, whether it was the mayor's office or city council members to say, we know that you know that there's a problem so what is the solution that the city is going to propose? And then went to the school board and did the same thing and said, Hey, school board, we know that you're doing a great job distributing laptops and hotspots, but we need a more permanent solution. What is it that you're going to do to invest in that problem? And the same with the LA County and even learning that there's an

entity called the CPUC. Again, this is an area that we are we're having to learn a lot about what California is doing to make internet accessible to folks. So we started with the basics and that is doing our research and figuring out who has the power, who has the influence, to provide families with the quality internet that they need. And then we started advocating to them sending letters. We contributed to motions and resolutions and gave testimony at the meeting so that we could carry the voice of our families to them. The other big action that we did was in October of 2021. We along with GPS San, the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, Alliance for a Better Community, and United Parents and Students, we brought together a group of organizations to order to add an event that we call Death to Internet Monopoly. So it was a Halloween theme event where we dressed up as grim reapers. We took a physical casket out there, filled it up with laptops and hotspots. And we went to the AT&T headquarters and we said, hey, internet service providers, you all have the power to change the direction that we are moving in when it comes to internet access. And you really are the ones that are the gatekeepers now because government is trying but we know that with your influence, you're preventing elected officials from doing more, we know that families are really disempowered. You can't pay your way out of an infrastructure problem. I speak as someone who lives in South Central Los Angeles, I used to pay \$65 for my internet, and my kids were always frustrated because we couldn't have two computers running at the same time. So I too, have experienced that and so all that to say is that the organizing starts by bringing the stories of the families and humanizing this infrastructure issue that we have, that we can continue to operate in a system and a society that tells families that only those that just happen to live in the right community or just happen to be able to afford internet can have access to the virtual world. And so for an organization like ours, we won't stop being involved in this, if anything, this pandemic and these conditions have forced us into this space. And we see that us ignoring the infrastructure issues is really telling kids and society that we stand to repeat the same problems again. If you think about what happened in Texas when they had that Big Freeze, they discovered abruptly that they weren't prepared to take on a disaster of that magnitude. Just because the sun came out doesn't mean that the problems went away in those communities. So the same thing is what we are facing here in Los Angeles, just because schools have re-opened doesn't mean that our children have the what they need to do their homework, to do their research and to engage in the world that we are living in. We're talking about the meta universe, but kids can't even access Netflix at home. Think about the disconnect and the message that we are sending children about what we think about their place in the world, when in a place like Los Angeles, we still haven't done enough to bring them into the 21st century. The call here today is to invest in organizations like GPSN that is building the capacity for organizations, communities and schools in order for us to continue to advocate and not only be the spokespeople for families, but we actually will have started to invest in parents and students gaining a sense of agency themselves, for them to elevate their own voices and tell their stories. And really act as the moral barometer for elected officials and for the Internet service providers to invest more and to put away greed and put more emphasis on giving students access to 21st century technology and broadband connectivity.

Efrain Escobedo 57:28

Well said, Elmer, thank you so much and for really connecting it. We've got some questions and I'm gonna move to those one or two, a couple of things. First is I know that we've focused a lot on small business impact and education and want to give a shout out to Davis Park who also reminds us, I want to bring in the fact that this also affected older adults as well in many of our low income, communities of color, when telehealth moved to digital. Older adults were disparately impacted absolutely with this and being able to access critical services and help that where life and death for many of our older adults. So want to just acknowledge that. The other is just as we open it up to the panel, just want to point out two things that I think are very important and Elmer appreciate your call to action, which is the organizing, and organizing of the organizers have really brought the voices of the most affected definitely to this issue. But what they've also done is I think, for many of us identified some of the root causes. And we've said

infrastructure a lot but what I hope many of you heard in these stories is that this is not a connection problem. This is not a problem to being able to subscribe to the internet. This is not a simply a problem of lacking a device. When we say an infrastructure problem. This is an inclusion and empowerment problem that is addressing the fact that in LA County, the West Side accesses their internet through fiber. In the south and east sides, we have to use cell towers. That is infrastructure. And that is where the problem is and limits opportunity, power to decide our own digital destinies. And so what you hear in these stories have led to the realization that that is the problem. That part of the problem is infrastructure and we heard it from Elmer's own experience and others and so as we dive into this conversation, let's be cognizant of that. So it's not really a problem of the unserved, it's really a much deeper problem than that. So I there was a question in the chat and maybe this is for our friends at TURN, Gabriela and all the panelists, which is so, in this current moment, with so much advocacy growing up, where are the knowledge gaps and resource gaps, what could be supported also to fill some of that? Gabriela, did you want to chime in to that question.

Gabriela Sandoval 1:00:38

Yeah, absolutely. And I think this goes to some of the other questions that were in the chat as well. I want to just lift up a couple of things that folks said, the stories, we need those stories. Especially our decision makers, they get bombarded with stats, and it's so important to put a human face on this. So even though we've heard a lot of the stories, there are plenty of stories we have not yet heard. So we absolutely need those stories. Also data. While it's incredibly important that we get better data about who actually has access, we also have to recognize and we have to really start to push the internet service providers. We don't know how much it costs them to provide a service and yet they're charging us inordinate amounts of money for service that is often unreliable and inadequate to the needs of communities. So in addition to not knowing how much it actually costs to serve communities, we don't know that the number of disconnections, plenty of people were disconnected during the pandemic because they could not afford to pay their bills. And so we don't have any idea how many people can no longer access an account because they have outstanding debt. And then speaking of debt, that's another very important gap. We don't know how much debt is owed by broadband customers to the ISPs. And this is critical. We've seen this in water utilities. We've seen this in energy utilities, the state government and the federal government have been able to support customers, affected consumers, California residents affected by an inability to pay their utility bills, their energy bills. Many people have gotten. We've got all sorts of new sources of support state funds, federal funds. Well, guess what? There's no funds for broadband debt. Yes, you can sign up and several of my panelists here have mentioned the difficulties in signing up just for a discount. But if you've got a ton of debt and you can't even open a new account, or you've been disconnected, what how do we help those folks? So that's a very, very critical gap in data that we don't have. And I'm going to stop there and see if any of anybody else wants to add something for now.

Ana Teresa Dahan 1:03:17

I do want to jump in because I think there's two important points to make. I think the question came from service providers. We need this information. The right information, signing up in multiple languages. It is not available in Spanish, it's not available in other prominent languages that are spoken in Los Angeles or in California. And so having people access whatever is being offered is always... forget not having the connectivity or the time but even just accessibility with language and that's just very important. So I think that's an important ask. And I think I just also want to underscore this difference between unserved and underserved and the power of data of really showing who's underserved because what typically happens in these conversations, as the math is put up, and you see who has internet and who doesn't, and then we automatically start talking about those who don't have it. But if we have data to show quality cost, all the other factors mentioned by other providers like the debts, what type of households, there's cyber redlining but many people are familiar with housing redlining, is also occurring, but we can't make that

argument without the data and that gets to underserved. And so this really impacts populous cities of major city centers because it looks like on a map that there is connectivity, but as you dig deeper, as Efrain and Elmer have shared, South Los Angeles looks very different than West LA, within blocks, within houses, and so this is why data is important. So we can talk about underserved and then we could talk about the race issue and an income issue because then we'll also see that these divides come up in that way. And the cost is also very different depending on your race and your income. And so I think these this is why data is so important, because it's not as simple as just saying I can connect it or not.

Efrain Escobedo 1:05:31

Any other thoughts from folks? I will share to this point in sort of just adding to what we're needing to reverse and why we need serious investment, why we need to engage our regulatory bodies and policymakers, is that from a purely economic argument. When we at the foundation were trying to learn more about the problem and why certain things exist. And we're asking about infrastructure. We had an ISP provider tried to explain to us well, the reason there's fiber in some communities and not others is it just doesn't make economic sense to put fiber in certain communities. And so until that has changed, if it's a pure business decision, it doesn't make business sense. And I think what we're hearing from the panel today is it's not a business sense, industry cluster, market share conversation. This is a civil rights, digital equity and a human need conversation that can be driven by those kinds of economics. Any other questions? Miguel, am I missing a question, I'd invite you to chime in, I know that the chats blowing up right now, but in the interim, anything else our panelists want to share to some of the questions that have come up?

Ana Teresa Dahan 1:06:58

Yes, I just wanted to let everyone know that there is a story bank Google Form for folks who want to share the stories. We're also trying to work on getting a print version of this for folks, we know oftentimes even just accessing a Google Form is difficult still for a lot of our organizers. Until we get that together, I'm dropping the link now in the chat of the Google Form you can fill out if you have stories, the California Community Foundation in partnership with with GPSN is collecting these and will work with those entities to find opportunities to uplift those stories, both in earned media but as well as to elected officials. And we're also working on the Spanish version as well. So that is now in the chat. And we'll drop it again to just share your stories.

Efrain Escobedo 1:07:52

So let me ask of the panel also because the theme of this panel is around harnessing the advocacy of our communities, so if we're thinking about that, and for those of us engaging with different community organizations and community leaders, where would you say right now leading up say to the next several months, where is the advocacy needed? What should people be looking at right now that is critical to the work in advancing digital?

Elmer Roldan 1:08:29

I would say continuing to put pressure on elected officials to keep this front and center. Elected officials have a bully pulpit. They have a platform from which they can continue to keep this conversation public. They obviously have access to funding that they can that they can include in the conversation but elected officials are also persuaded by the Internet service providers, directly or indirectly. And so we need elected officials to stand on this on the side of communities and on the side of their constituents. And in order to advance this fight, which as we've all seen, has been really difficult to advance because the internet service providers have the upper hand. They control how much data is released to the public. They control how they choose to bundle packages or how they make the internet available to folks, for lack of a more technical way of saying it, but also they choose they control the narrative right now. So the

notion that there just isn't enough internet to go around because the infrastructure issues are beyond anyone's ability to fix is convenient because then, as long as they control the narrative, and they rule with secrecy, then it's harder for folks to have an educated conversation about redlining and about these other issues. So elected officials really do hold power because they can shed light on a lot of these challenges that we've been discussing here today.

Efrain Escobedo 1:10:31

Thank you for that. I see Gabriela then Alexis.

Gabriela Sandoval 1:10:34

So I just want to say along with the individuals at the kind of local level, we need individuals as well as organizations at the CPUC level. So the CPUC right now is saying, they're requesting public input through the broadband infrastructure deployment proceeding. They want input, they get tons of input again, to Elmer's point, tons of input from the internet providers. They get tons of input, paid input, the industry has so much money to give to their attorneys to come to the PUC and make argue their case. We need the GPSNs and the CISLAs and City Heights, CDC to come and join us, to learn how to become formal parties to a proceeding so that your and your constituents voices are heard at the Public Utilities Commission. Again, there are currently \$6 billion middle mile infrastructure, last mile infrastructure and again, I think TURN is committed to serving as a resource and as an advisor to your organizations and those of the attendees online. Contact me, call me up. I'm happy to drop my contact information here, I'm sure that it will go out with follow up information. And it's such a critical place and there are very few voices. there are very few individual voices, and it tends to be the usual suspects in proceedings. This is a critical place where community can intervene, you can sign up at the TURN website and it's turn.org/actions, you can sign up for action alerts, and you will hear from TURN as an individual or as an organization about opportunities to provide public comment at CPUC business meetings, to provide public comment at public participation hearings. We will work with organizations to convince the PUC to hold public hearings in your communities. This is critical but if we're not all pulling together, the opportunity, this amazing opportunity that we have right now, where there is actually movement, significant movement to potentially close the digital divide, it will slip out from under us. I will put information in the chat, contact me, contact my colleagues. We want to work with, we are grasstops so we want to work with the organizations that are organizing and that are organizing the organizers. Absolutely. Thank you for that. Alexis, and then we have a couple other questions.

Alexis Villanueva 1:13:35

Yeah, I think it starts with the education and outreach. I think there are organizations and specifically in San Diego that have no idea that there's no infrastructure, that have no idea that ISP providers play such a huge role in digital discrimination. And so, I think when we got involved in the budget process and asking more questions around why the money goes where it goes, and specifically why we're investing in Wi Fi hotspots, what are some of the other options, that kind of opened individuals' eyes, but what I really want to pinpoint is that there's a lot of organizations where this is at the heart of what they do, and they want to be more involved. But the capacity of these organizations is very limited. And so this is kind of a call to the funders, a lot of times when we talk about these enthused individual organizations who are doing great work, and in particularly in City Heights we have a ton of organizations who understand how to work with this community of 50 plus languages, who understand and have build trust with these communities. And they don't have the capacity to go out there and talk to policymakers and to organize around this issue, even though they understand that it affects them. Even though they understand that their clients need this assistance. So the call to funders, when you're funding these organizations, think about operational costs, think about staffing costs, they get about the idea that there needs to be capacity to go to these policy meetings. Because what I have seen and most of the time when when they come to

us, it's because we have the time to do it. We have the capacity to do it. But I would love for those organizations who have three or four individuals who are super passionate about these issues, and the clients that are sitting next to them to be at the table talking about these same stories, because that's so important. And because it is passion for them. There's efforts out to the funders.

Efrain Escobedo 1:15:24

Thank you for that, Alexis. And from the chat, want to bring in a question that asked with the unprecedented investment that we've seen on the part of California and as you said Gabriela, CPUC is playing a key role in driving or directing those investments as a question and outcomes that says how can these investments maybe increase the number of ISPs in the market to reduce some of the monopoly that exists in California or how could these investments just change those monopolies?

Gabriela Sandoval 1:16:03

Well, I think several of my co panelists here have talked about municipal service, but also there's a local agency Technical Assistance Fund. This is \$50 million. And it's a \$50 million grant program to reimburse eligible local governments and tribal entities to for work that facilitates last mile broadband infrastructure to communities. Now, mind you, this is unprecedented. This has never gone to local agencies before. And we are seeing movement here. Now again, this is another place where the big organizations, the big entities, they're already organizing their member organizations to snatch up that \$50 million. So when you think about it, \$50 million is not that much money. So this is a critical moment where organizations, other small local entities who are interested can tap into some of the coalitions that are growing, to access some of that technical assistance to be able to come to the CPUC and make the case for accessing some of those funds for your communities. And we're especially concerned with the communities that have been left behind because those big organizations, they don't necessarily care about equity. They've been doing business as usual for 50 years or however long they've been in existence. So we are very concerned that the smaller organizations that have recently become interested that are becoming important players in addressing the digital divide also have reasonable access to these funds, because it can make a huge difference especially for the smaller scrappy organizations that are truly addressing the equity issues involved in in access to broadband.

Efrain Escobedo 1:17:58

That's not intended just for governments, is that also inclusive of potential entities that are nonprofits or other types of entities?

Gabriela Sandoval 1:18:09

So it's a little bit complicated. I think it's primarily local governments and tribal entities but there are other agencies that can get involved and there's also a way in which the smaller organizations can partner with larger organizations to access the funds or can partner with their local governments to access the funds. So we have been instrumental TURN has been instrumental in asking for, well, I won't say demanding, we've been very diplomatic about this, but we have said to the PUC, look, you have to take equity into account here because otherwise, the funds will just go to the usual suspects again, and and the questions around the digital divide and the underserved and unserved will not be addressed if you allow this to just be business as usual.

Efrain Escobedo 1:19:04

Thank you. Ana Teresa?

Ana Teresa Dahan 1:19:07

I wanted to just address something that may not have been explicit, but was very implicit in what Gabriela was talking about, which is when there are these opportunities and how folks especially on the ISP side, the big ones organize, they actually oftentimes leverage nonprofits to be their spokespeople. And I would be remiss to not have a conversation about nonprofits and not mention that that happens. We all as nonprofits, we are all working to fundraise money. Sometimes that includes corporate donations, and we've all have hunted down the Community Relations Officer as these entities that give out funds, but now because there is this momentum, and there is a lot of nonprofits working on this, the other side realizes that they also need to organize the organizers and they're trying to target nonprofits and many nonprofits don't realize that no one comes and says oh, the reason we need you is because we're trying to actually protect this financial interest they come in, they'll say the government is investing an unprecedented amount of money. Don't you agree that that money should go directly to the people that you work with? Doesn't that sound like what should happen and then of course, someone who's really busy and cares about people that they work with would say, Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah, Sign me up. I'll do that. But what they don't realize is that when we advocate for subsidies that go directly to people that's not solving the problem because of these underserved issues that we talked about, it is just potentially a band aid. And actually, it becomes very dangerous for some of the people that you're working with, because often times those subsidies run out. Those service providers will move your people not into a low cost plan, but to the default plan that works for them. And then that also leads to like debt accumulation. When you want to have debt and there's no program to get rid of that debt, you can't access internet. We have to be wise about the investments and supports that we're taking. It's difficult because nonprofits, we live and die by those donations. But this is a moment in time where we have to really consider what it is that we're advocating for. And just a little bit more homework and take advantage of the opportunities to learn more.

Efrain Escobedo 1:21:41

Thank you. We're wrapping up and winding down our panel, but because it's a great opportunity when we have this much great leadership and expertise on the panel, I want to ask one more question that came in the chat, because data was so prominent in all of your comments and that is, one of our participants asked how the required state broadband max as part of the IJAA will illustrate the actual number of underserved, do these maps provide data that we need for advocacy or will they not be?

Gabriela Sandoval 1:22:42

I think they will help. But I think that no one source of data and this includes maps, there are so many tricky ways that the ISPs use. One of the stories that we heard over and over again had to do with families who negotiated with, I won't name names right now, but negotiated with a particular company to get a certain speed of access. And so and they were oversold oftentimes, they were marketed a very expensive service and families out of desperation to keep their kids online or to access employment, agreed to pay these exorbitant rates for very high speed internet, but then they weren't given high speed internet. So sadly, the mapping data doesn't show that. This is such a complex issue because it has to do with, first is there cultural relevancy? I see this a lot with seniors. A lot of my seniors in my family, my parents are immigrants. My mom is like, what do I need internet for? I don't need internet. So first you got to overcome that cultural relevance problem. And then you have to overcome the digital literacy problem, the access to technology, then there's an infrastructure issue. So again, there's layer after layer after layer, there's affordability. There's any number of other issues that crop up so this is a very multi-layered onion that we're trying to peel, very multi-layered issue that we're trying to resolve. I've been using internet forever, I didn't even know that you could go online and test your speed. So folks need to be able to say, I'm paying for X number of, we get sold this, I don't know what this many gigabytes or megabytes or whatever are. Most people don't necessarily know, so you're sold a certain amount, but then guess what, sometimes they don't give you that amount and you actually have to complain, but in order to know

you have to complain you have to be able to measure your upload speeds and your download speeds. I mean, it's just like a never ending, never ending layers that we have to peel back. And so yes, absolutely. The maps and there's all sorts of different mapping and mapping of data projects that are going on right now. Critical. But we also have to address those places in which the ISPs or other entities kind of they slip on past us and we need to be able to address that as well. If we're not all pulling together, and we're not addressing this on all the different layers, it's a problem that will get away from us. It's an opportunity that will get away from us.

Efrain Escobedo 1:25:42

Such a great point. Not only in this movement, but we've seen it all, many of us in other movements is, it's great to have research produced by agencies. There's a lot of power then after that and filling in the gaps through community led and community driven research, which is so critical and that's kind of your thank you for highlighting that. But we've come to the end of our panel and I first want to just express my tremendous gratitude, and you all letting me be part of your conversation and gratitude for the tremendous work you all are doing in helping to drive what is a once in a generation opportunity around digital equity and as Elmer said, definitely a must do if we want to ensure the inclusion of our next generations in what is becoming a more and more digital world. So want to express gratitude for that and also share that we look forward to and hopefully all of you in this call to becoming allies, working in solidarity and in the collective to get this done. So thank you again, to all of you in the work that you're doing now and that you will be doing in the coming years. Miguel, I will turn it over to you and also thank you and Michelson 20MM for this ongoing space and for including me in it. Thank you.

Miguel Leon 1:27:17

Muchas gracias, Efrain. Thank you to all of our amazing panelists for sharing your wisdom, your expertise, your stories. Your tenacity, passion and love for community is truly driving this movement toward digital equity for all Californians. Thank you so much. The power of advocacy, how nonprofits are shaping broadband policy in California, was presented by the Michelson 20MM Foundation in service of advancing digital equity for all students and families. We want to thank our foundation partners, the California Community Foundation, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Southern California Grantmakers, we'll post the recording of today's discussion on our YouTube channel and the Michelson 20MM Foundation site tomorrow. The video will include links in the description so that you may join the Connecting California LinkedIn Group, a dedicated space to foster collaboration and calculate advanced digital equity and close the divide faster and together. If you or your organization want to become part of our digital equity work, please reach out to me personally at miguel@20mm.org. You can also stay engaged by signing up for our newsletter@20mm.org to receive news and updates about Connecting California as well as our other events and programs. A special thank you to all the nonprofit organizations in our audience who work tirelessly every single day to make a difference for students. Thank you for always being our guides in this work and our inspiration for staying focused and on task. If you're new to the digital equity policy conversation you heard today, you are needed now more than ever to stay engaged and get involved. Every little bit helps against industry goliaths. Thanks again for taking the time to join us today. We look forward to seeing you at our next Connecting California event. Take care and have a great rest of your day.