

March 4, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

On behalf of the membership of LeadingAge New York, I'm writing to ask that the State prioritize connectivity for low-income seniors and other vulnerable populations living in affordable housing as you plan to distribute more than \$1 billion in State and federal funds to expand broadband infrastructure and access.

Like many other subsidized housing properties, most affordable senior housing lacks wall-to-wall internet, negatively impacting property operations and – more importantly – resident wellbeing. With limited opportunities to access the internet, low-income older adults and other vulnerable New Yorkers living in subsidized housing have largely been excluded from digital advances in telemedicine and socialization that could be critical to helping them stay healthy and avoid more costly levels of care during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. As you know, the State bears much of the cost of Medicaid-funded nursing homes, which can range from \$30,000 to upwards of \$50,000 per individual, per year in State expenditures. If targeting available resources for broadband expansion to affordable housing can help even a fraction of those assisted maintain independence, the potential future savings are enormous.

For these reasons, we believe that taking steps to prioritize affordable housing properties and their residents as downstream beneficiaries of more than \$400M in State and federal broadband funding as well as up to \$800M from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) would not only allow the State to meet or exceed stated access, adoption, affordability, equity, and inclusion goals for these funds, but would ultimately maximize the lasting benefits of its one-time investment to low-income New Yorkers.

Reaching publicly assisted households without internet access can be, in large part, achieved by outfitting entire multifamily residential properties receiving subsidy, as this approach leverages existing public investment to optimize the direct benefit to key demographics and would result in lasting improvements for future low-income renters. In addition, LeadingAge New York makes the following recommendations to ensure distribution of broadband capital is truly equitable and results in lasting affordability:

- Designate a minimum level of broadband funding that should reach affordable housing communities, including both State- and federally assisted properties.
- Establish clear metrics and reporting requirements to gauge successful distribution to target beneficiaries.
- Incentivize projects that prioritize extremely vulnerable populations, such as low-income rural and senior households.
- Engage with not-for-profits and other small entities already established in underserved communities, including home care, hospice, and other organizations that serve vulnerable individuals in their homes and can help evaluate ongoing connectivity needs.
- Preserve the right to neutral cabling in multifamily projects – rather than allowing exclusive wiring or marketing agreements – to encourage price competition and enhance resident choice.

I urge you to support the healthy aging of New York's low-income senior population by prioritizing connectivity and equity for affordable housing as the State rolls out its historic investment of more than \$1 billion to expand broadband infrastructure and access in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration on this important issue and your continued efforts to ensure that older adults throughout the state can continue to live safely and independently in the homes of their choice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Clyne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" and last name "Clyne" clearly distinguishable.

James W. Clyne, Jr.  
President & CEO  
LeadingAge New York