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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2021

Ms. Asia King
Economic Development Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Ste. 71014
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Letter of Support for PWEAA broadband-strategy proposal of The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash and Economic Alliance Foundation

Dear Ms. King:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash's application, along with co-applicant, Economic Alliance Foundation (EconAlliance), for the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance (PWEAA) grant, so that they can partner with other County jurisdictions to accelerate a competitive level of broadband addressing Northern Santa Barbara County's (NSBC) economic development. This would foster industry attraction, retention, expansion and support the survival and economic vitality of businesses severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Northern Santa Barbara County, of which I represent in the 24th California Congressional District, has been challenged with poor high-speed internet and connectivity infrastructure, which is more apparent now than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. The speed and connectivity hinders communities in North County from attracting top level companies with high paying jobs. The impacts of the current on NSBC, are exasperated by telecommuting, which in turn, affects economic vitality and expansion of existing businesses. Simultaneously, health, public safety, education, and workforce development are being impacted by, almost, non-existent broadband.

This region has three hospitals, as well as a string of Community Health Centers (CHCs), which, due to COVID-19, are proactively implementing telehealth options. Local schools and higher education are practicing distance learning. Both areas are struggling with poor bandwidth, but most alarming is that the regional center for countywide evacuation, Santa Maria Fairpark, has no broadband.

Another example of critical need is the expansion of commercial space at Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), which is one of the nation's two most critical space launch complexes. VAFB supports the Department of Defense's polar launches and ICBM missile testing. Additionally, VAFB has a stated goal of becoming a "spaceport of the future", catering to a commercial space business opportunity projected to grow exponentially. The projected economic boom for the region is estimated at \$2.4 billion.

Agriculture is the County's number one economic driver, responsible for \$2.5 billion in revenue. This industry is affected more than most with over 100 commodities, and 250 wineries, that export to 40 countries. The region also features a significant manufacturing industry, a 100-year-old energy industry, a formerly healthy retail sector, and has welcomed an emerging IT sector. Growth, effectiveness, and innovation in these industries are not fully realized due to NSBC's broadband limitations, especially in the COVID-19 environment.

California Public Utilities Commission (as of December 31, 2018) showed that the Santa Barbara County broadband adoption rate as 83%. This is a minimum of 6 Mbps download speed and 1 Mbps upload speed, hardly the desired speed for business, telework, telehealth and distance learning. A recent analysis of statewide broadband, *California Broadband Infrastructure Report Card, March 2020, Tellus Venture Association*, gave Santa Barbara County a D-. This rating was in direct correlation to the fact that there is only one wireline provider offering, and not necessarily in all areas, broadband speeds of 100 Mbps down/20 Mbps up, with some areas having no wireline provider at all.

Fortunately, in 2019, the USDA designated the NSBC as a focus area for support under the Rural Prosperity Initiative. In 2020, EconAlliance was tapped to coordinate the resulting Community Prosperity Council(s) affiliated with the regional designation.

Additionally in 2020, The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash, EconAlliance, and the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast, in cooperation, developed and were awarded a broadband-related grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior, leveraging the "Northern Santa Barbara County Fiber Ring Network", which fosters broadband linkage, broadband continuity, and redundancy in North County. Since that time, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash has begun playing a strong role in enhancing North County broadband, working closely with EconAlliance and the Broadband Consortium Pacific Coast to coordinate North County efforts. This collaboration among North County jurisdictions is a key step in enhancing North County broadband, laying the foundation for a stronger recovery from COVID-19.

Once again, I would like to express my strong support for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash and EconAlliance's application with full and fair consideration, consistent with all relevant rules and regulations. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Wendy Motta in my Santa Barbara district office by email wendy.motta@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "SALUD CARBAL". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress