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Support of the Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act

WHEREAS: High-speed Internet connection provides a gateway to economic growth, jobs, education, healthcare, public safety, energy efficiency, civic participation, and communication among friends and family; and

WHEREAS: Only 67 percent of people in the US have a wired broadband connection - the percentage is even worse for low-income, African-American, and Hispanic communities; and

WHEREAS: More than 24 million Americans – including 19 million rural Americans – still lack access to broadband service at 25/3 Mbps speeds; and

WHEREAS: 30 percent of US households have zero choice and 48 percent of US households have only one choice – cable – for high-speed broadband; and

WHEREAS: 70 percent of teachers assign homework online, yet 12 million children lack access to broadband; and

WHEREAS: Millions of working families don't have access to high-speed broadband or are unable to afford it, a crisis that is exacerbated by the pandemic. Further, over the past 30 years, deregulation has left policymakers with few tools to require universal buildout of affordable high-speed networks for all communities; and

WHEREAS: Public policy that encourages investment in broadband networks must be grounded in policies that support the growth of good jobs, fair labor standards, and respect for workers' rights in the telecommunications industry, such as those in Congressman Jim Clyburn (D-SC) and Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)'s Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act (H.R.7302 / S.4131) includes provisions that would support providing broadband access to millions of families and would ensure that workers doing that build out are able to exercise their rights and bargain collectively; and

WHEREAS: The Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act provides \$80 billion to deploy broadband to unserved areas, creating and preserving good jobs, while also containing strong protections for workers' rights and union organizing such as preventing recipients of the deployment funding from interfering with labor organizing by requiring recipients to remain neutral in workers' organizing efforts and requiring first-contract bargaining and binding arbitration; and

WHEREAS: The Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act provides support to make broadband service more affordable by establishing a broadband benefit program that entitles households with a member who qualifies for Lifeline, free/reduced school lunch, or is recently unemployed to receive a \$50 benefit to put toward the monthly price of Internet service; and

WHEREAS: The Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act helps close the digital divide by

establishing a grant program for schools and libraries to fund connectivity for students and teachers in the digital classroom, which includes funds for wired and wireless broadband connections at students' homes. It also contains two new grant programs aimed at providing localities with funding to create and implement comprehensive digital equity plans to help close gaps in broadband adoption and skill.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Ohio AFL-CIO supports the Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act and urges Congress to enact the legislation to create good jobs, make broadband affordable and help close the digital divide.

*Submitted by: **The Communications Workers of America District 4***