1 **CITY OF SEATTLE**

2 **RESOLUTION** _____

3 ..title
4 A RESOLUTION establishing the City Council's goal to implement Internet for All Seattle, a
5   vision of enabling all Seattle residents to access and adopt broadband internet service that
6   is reliable and affordable.
7 ..body
8 WHEREAS, The City of Seattle (City) and multiple local internet service providers offer various

9   no-cost and low-cost options for residents and non-profit organizations throughout the

10   city such as library access, mobile hotspots, Comcast's Internet Essentials program, but

11   the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the reality of inequitable and detrimental gaps in

12   internet access, adoption, and affordability throughout Seattle; and

13 WHEREAS, the City has been pursuing strategies to expand access and adoption to broadband

14   internet, including the founding in 1997 of the Technology Matching Fund, the 2011

15   Great Student Initiative, and the 2016 Digital Equity Initiative; and

16 WHEREAS, the City's 2018 Technology Access and Adoption Study reported that, while the

17   number of Seattle households reporting access to the internet where they live has

18   increased by 10 ten percent since 2014, people living in low-income and populations who

19   are insecurely-housed are nevertheless five to seven times more likely to lack adequate

20   access to the internet than the average Seattle resident; and

21 WHEREAS, the 2018 Technology Access and Adoption Study also showed that older residents,

22   those with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents, and

23   those for whom English is not their primary language are less likely to have access to the

24   internet compared with other groups, and 23 percent of residents reported barriers that

25   limit their internet use, such as lack of affordability and slow or unreliable service; and

1   WHEREAS, lack of access to the internet and barriers to adoption of internet service were

2   highlighted and exacerbated by temporary closures to combat the spread of COVID-19,

3   including Governor Jay Inslee's emergency order on March 13, 2020 closing all K-12

4   schools in Washington and Mayor Jenny Durkan's emergency order on March 12, 2020

5   temporarily closing libraries and community centers; and

6   WHEREAS, inequities in internet access and affordability and adoption can lead to disparate

7   outcomes during a crisis, such as reduced access to relief programs for individuals and

8   small neighborhood businesses and barriers preventing students from participating in

9   remote learning; and

10 WHEREAS, advocacy group API Chaya authored an open letter to the City of Seattle and King

11   County in April 2020 "WIFI is a Lifeline, Free WIFI for All" explaining connectivity can

12   serve as a social safety net for those least able to afford broadband services and a public

13   amenity providing ~~increasing~~increased access to the internet without using cellular data

14   plans; and

15 WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 related school closures and remote learning

16   alternatives put in place, Seattle Public Schools (SPS), in collaboration with Attuned

17   Education Partners, invited all families, educators, school leaders, and central office staff

18   to participate in stakeholder surveys intended to inform future improvements to the

19   district's capacity to support continuous remote learning in May 2020; and

20 WHEREAS, SPS survey results from May 2020 found "Roughly 99% of family and caregiver

21   respondents reported that their student has a reliable tablet, laptop, or computer" but with

22   "37% reporting that the device is shared with someone else in the household" and that

1   "educators cited the need for stronger methods to deliver lessons virtually, [and]

2   improved technology tools"; and

3 WHEREAS, May 2020 SPS data demonstrated that, for the PreK-5 grade levels, educators

4   reported "Students lack internet access" as among their top 3three barriers to student

5   learning; and

6 WHEREAS, in the May 2020 SPS survey, 61% of family and caregiver respondents are

7   "concerned" (36%) or "extremely concerned" (25%)" about their student learning and

8   those reporting the highest levels of concern about learning were respondents who

9   identified as American Indian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and

10   respondents with students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs); and

11 WHEREAS, these recent findings from the May 2020 SPS survey echo, in part, three key

12   barriers to internet adoption in the Federal Communication Commission's National

13   Broadband Plan: 1) the cost of broadband access for low-income households, 2) the lack

14   of an affordable computing device in the home, and 3) the absence of digital literacy; and

15 WHEREAS, the King County 2020 Broadband Access Study released in July 2020 affirms that,

16   "for communities to be vibrant, we must remove barriers preventing residents from full

17   and equitable digital engagement, leverage community partners to expand internet

18   capacity and computer literacy, and increase infrastructure options with public/private

19   partners"; and

20 WHEREAS, the King County 2020 Broadband Access Study found a correlation between lack of

21   income and lack of internet access and, while 96 percent of county residents report

22   accessing the internet from their households, only 80 percent of low-income households

23   do; and

1   WHEREAS, thousands of youth striving to become the next generation of workers need

2   affordable internet access to advance their education, access to information, technical

3   training, and job opportunities; and

4   WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 "Stay Home, Stay Healthy"-order, people have needed to

5   rely on an internet connection for telemedicine and healthcare provided online, and

6   Seattle's infrastructure must facilitate a future when a higher amount of medical care is

7   done remotely, including examining private/public partnerships with service providers;

8   and

9   WHEREAS, those without shelter lack access to the internet and have barriers to adequate

10   medical care. According to the 2018-2019 King County Community Health Needs

11   Assessment, "people of color and low-income residents are at disproportionate risk of

12   being uninsured and having poor health and social outcomes;" and

13 WHEREAS, the Seattle Public Library closed to the public on March 13, 2020 in response to the

14   COVID-19 pandemic, shutting down in-person access to programs such as the Library

15   Equal Access Program (LEAP)'s which coordinates accessible Library services,

16   materials, programs and provides resources such as the technology lab in the Central

17   Library; and

18 WHEREAS, due to COVID-19 limitations, adult basic education programs such as Literacy

19   Source, serving more than 1,000 adult learners in Seattle and King County, who partner

20   with other organizations such as the Seattle Public Library, Asian Counseling and

21   Referral Service (ACRS), and Neighborhood House to provide English language

22   translation, computer skills, workforce readiness, and GED classes to adult learners have

1   had to provide all classes remotely, which has required increased internet access and

2   adoption; and

3 WHEREAS, there are additional barriers beyond a lack of technology skills for many adult

4   students, including not having adequate technology or internet access at home; and

5 WHEREAS, nonprofits and direct service providers for survivors of gender-based violence such

6   as API Chaya have found that clients rely on Google Translate for critical resources and

7   need the internet to connect with family and other support networks; and

8 WHEREAS, organizations such as the National Digital Inclusion Alliance have recommended

9   culturally competent "Digital Navigators" or similar support workers, to assist with

10   technology skills/literacy who can work with communities where they are; and

11 WHEREAS, the City Council wants to substantially increase internet access and adoption in

12   order to prevent a repeat of the problems experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic

13   and to maximize economic opportunities for its residents and local businesses; and

14 WHEREAS, increased internet access and adoption will enable more workers to telecommute,

15   which will benefit the environment by reducing harmful carbon emissions and assist the

16   City in meeting its goals to address climate change; and

17 WHEREAS, assumptions about financial risk, competitive challenges, and partnership

18   opportunities associated with increasing internet access and adoption warrant review; and

19 WHEREAS, consumer advocates report up to 90% of the cost of building out broadband

20   infrastructure can be saved by following "dig-once" policies ensuring fiberoptic conduit

21   is included whenever the City is undergoing construction in the public right-of-way or

22   utility space; and

1 WHEREAS, the City has broad authority to decide the circumstances under which it will provide

2   internet service providers, telecommunication companies, and other private organizations

3   access to streets, utility poles, rights of way, and other means to provide services to

4   Seattle residents and businesses; and

5 WHEREAS, several cities across the United States including, but not limited to, Tacoma,

6   Anacortes, Cedar Falls, Iowa and Chattanooga, Tennessee, have attempted to implement

7   municipal broadband, and other dramatic increases in internet access and adoption with

8   variable success due to various constraints, and can therefore provide lessons for Seattle's

9   pursuit toward universal accessibility and adoption of reliable broadband internet

10   accessSeattle; and

11 WHEREAS, Seattle is a global center of technology and innovation with a local economy that

12   relies on internet connectivity and has a vested interest in making affordable and

13   universal internet access and adoption a fundamental part of Seattle's infrastructure; and

14 WHEREAS, Seattle residents regularly report that they are unsatisfied with the quality, price,

15   and customer service provided by the incumbent telecommunications companies,

16   according to a 2018 American Customer Satisfaction Index survey; and

17 WHEREAS, the City believes it is vital to equitably expand affordable and reliable access to

18   broadband internet service to all its residents in a sustainable manner; NOW,

19   THEREFORE,

20 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE**

21 **MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:**

1   Section 1. The City Council commits to the goal of enabling all Seattle residents to access

2   and adopt broadband internet service that is reliable and affordable, which can be called Internet

3   for All Seattle.

4   Section 2. The City Council recognizes that inequitable internet service and disparate

5   outcomes during the COVID-19 emergency have been caused by, among other challenges, a lack

6   of affordability, ~~lack of access to~~ technical assistance, and other barriers to adoption as well as

7   slow or failed internet connections and other shortcomings of reliability.

8   Section 3. The City Council requests that the Seattle Information Technology Department

9   provide to the Transportation and Utilities Committee the reports and plans necessary to

10   implement Internet for All Seattle including, but not limited to, the following:

11   A. Gap analysis: A succinct gap analysis that lists the no-cost and low-cost programs

12   already ~~provided by~~ available in The City of Seattle ~~and local internet service providers~~, while

13   quantifying the actual gaps in affordable internet access and adoption for Seattle residents,

14   updated with available data regarding the 2020 experience of students in Seattle Public Schools

15   and City of Seattle's "Dig Once" policy and its implementation.

16   B. Lessons learned: A brief study of lessons learned ~~since at least 2017~~ from cities that

17   ~~provide or~~ have ~~provided municipal~~ dramatically expanded access and adoption of reliable and

18   affordable broadband. internet.

19   C. Action plan: An Internet for All Seattle Action Plan (Action Plan) detailing the

20   recommended steps ~~for how~~ The City of Seattle can take to help to ensure in an expedited

21   manner universal access to and adoption of affordable broadband internet service for all residents

22   of Seattle, including but not limited to:

1   1. Partnerships: The strategic partnerships needed to implement the Action Plan,

2   including the business community, philanthropic organizations, Seattle Public Schools, state and

3   local nonprofits and academia, and City boards and departments including but not limited to the

4   Community Technology Advisory Board, Seattle Information Technology, Seattle City Light,

5   Seattle Public Utilities, the Seattle Department of Transportation, ~~the Seattle Public~~

6   ~~Library,~~Office of Economic Development, Department of Education and Early Learning, Office

7   of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and the Seattle Public Library.

8   2. Infrastructure: The infrastructure that must be built or acquired to enable

9   universal access throughout Seattle, which could include a combination of public and private

10   systems. This includes having equitable, "shovel-ready" plans to take advantage of federal and

11   state funding opportunities to expand infrastructure, including but not limited to, municipal

12   infrastructure for increasing internet access.

13   3. Resources: A budget estimating the public and private resources required to

14   implement the Action Plan efficiently (including start-up capital costs and ongoing operating

15   costs), which may include experienced consultants to assist the Seattle Information Technology

16   Department.

17   4. Timeline: An ambitious, yet achievable, schedule for implementing the Action

18   Plan including, but not limited to, a Race and Social Justice analysis to ensure an equitable

19   distribution and increase of affordable access and adoption as well as key milestones to track

20   progress that will be reported to the Council and to the general public.

21   5. Evaluations: A plan to implement both a near-term process evaluation to ensure

22   effective implementation of Internet for All Seattle, and a long-term outcomes evaluation to

23   assess the effectiveness of Internet for All Seattle once implemented.

1   a. The process evaluation should provide suggestions for improvements so

2 that corrective action can be taken to maximize the opportunities for successful implementation.

3   b. The outcome evaluation should describe lessons learned that can be

4 made available to other cities so that Internet for All can benefit other parts of the State of

5 Washington and the nation.

6   Section 4. Seattle's Information Technology Department will is requested to provide its

7 first report to the City Council Transportation & Utilities Committee by September 16, 2020 on

8 existing and proposed short-term solutions to increase internet access and adoption equitably,

9 and a timeline for presenting subsequent reports to the Committee for the longer term,

10 sustainable solutions of the Action Plan.

1   Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2020,

2   and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of

3   _____, 2020.

4   _____

5   President _____ of the City Council

6   The Mayor concurred the _____ day of _____, 2020.

7   _____

8   Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

9   Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2020.

10   _____

11   Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

12   (Seal)