



Statement by Joey Wender as delivered on February 11, 2026 to NTIA during its listening session regarding the use of BEAD nondeployment funds:

My name is Joey Wender and I am the Executive Director of the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition.

SHLB appreciates NTIA recognizing that community anchor institutions – schools, libraries, and health clinics – are important beneficiaries of BEAD funds to help unserved and underserved communities and vulnerable populations.

In addition to the traditional types of anchor institutions that we normally think of, Congress also gave broad deference and expansive flexibility to states to identify the places that serve as community anchor institutions.

Consistent with Congress recognizing that states are best situated to solve the connectivity challenges facing their communities, we urge NTIA to allow states to use BEAD funds to connect what they identify as an anchor institution (this includes houses of worship, senior centers, youth development organizations, and job training centers).

We also urge NTIA to allow states to use BEAD funds to support the many essential activities that are housed at anchors nationwide, including digital literacy.

Schools, libraries, health clinics and all types of anchors remain the heartbeats of our communities, and we look forward to working with NTIA to continue to support state and local efforts to promote anchors as community hubs.