FORESIGHT
Designing a Future for Health

Equitable access to basic needs and supports

Idea 41	Internet access as a public utility to foster connection and inclusion (utilities as a basic right)
Proposal 41a	Repeal state laws limiting communities' right to create municipal broadband
Description	**Repeal state laws limiting communities' right to create municipal broadband**
How will the proposed action advance equitable health and well-being?	Broadband internet access is crucial for a broad range of life activities, from getting (and often, performing) a job, to schooling, seeking information, connecting to other people, seeking emotional and other forms of help, and participating politically in one's community. This is especially true during the pandemic. Studies have found that a smartphone is no substitute for broadband access. Those who don't have good internet are at a significant disadvantage across a number of areas. Community broadband can provide internet access that is more equitable, inexpensive, and doesn't involve violations of privacy or network neutrality that disempower residents and empower other, centralized players outside of a community. Many states, however, have in place laws that put obstacles in the path of communities wishing to create community broadband. Repeal of these laws, which have been pushed by the monopolistic for-profit telecom providers, would make it easier for communities to bring their Internet service under their own control.
Is there work we can build on?	Community networks New America's work on community broadband ACLU's work on the public internet option
Who would have to act? Who would be key partners?	Ultimately, state legislators and governors would need to make this change. But they need to be pushed. Key partners would include civil society groups like the ACLU, Public Knowledge, Free Press, the Institute for Local Self Reliance (muninetworks.org) and the Open Technology Institute, and foundations. Representatives of communities that currently have poor Internet service would be key, as would groups that advocate for underserved communities. Many community broadband initiatives have also been pushed by local

	businesses who have found the lack of good connectivity has stifled their business, so any such businesses could be key allies.
A few high-level action steps	
Other comments or guidance	