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Contact: Taylor Gonsalves

Phone: (916) 319-2053

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Assemblymember Rodriguez Advances the Emergency Fairgrounds Broadband Communications Grant Act

(Sacramento, CA) – Yesterday, Assembly Bill (AB) 415 passed out of the Committee on Communications and Conveyance with unanimous support. AB 415 would establish a grant program to be administered by the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to build and upgrade broadband communication infrastructure at state-designated fairgrounds. Cal OES would determine funding awards based on a fairgrounds’ need for broadband capabilities to service an emergency response operation.

“As the first-ever Chair of the Emergency Management Committee, I have prioritized ensuring that we have effective emergency response plans ever since the committee’s inception. During the COVID-19 pandemic, fairgrounds, such as Cal Expo, were activated as testing sites. When visiting these sites, I quickly realized they needed to be equipped with high-speed broadband to serve as sites for emergency response effectively. AB 415 would provide funding to equip our fairgrounds,” **stated Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

Fairgrounds are used to host emergency personnel responding to fires, as human and animal evacuation centers, as COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites, and for other purposes in response to emergencies. Between 2012 and 2021, 71 of California’s 74 fairgrounds were activated in response to an emergency. Many of those fairgrounds were activated more than once a year during that same time period.

Several fairgrounds throughout the State, especially rural fairgrounds, lack the broadband infrastructure necessary to host emergency responders and evacuees. A study by CSU Chico in 2020 compared rural versus urban fairgrounds and found that rural fairgrounds are 15-20% less likely to have connection speeds capable of even a two-person video call.

“Following recent disasters, such as the Pajaro River levee breach, I visited the area to speak with community members and further understand the devastation they faced. As residents are moved to evacuation sites, often fairgrounds, they rely on broadband capabilities to receive updates. Providing funding to establish broadband at our State’s fairgrounds would ensure families can stay up-to-date and remain focused on the safety of their families,” **added Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

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Assemblymember Rodriguez ([Twitter](#)) represents the 53rd Assembly District which includes the cities of Chino, Montclair, Ontario, Pomona, and Upland. He is Chair of the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management.