



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Partnership to Move People with Disabilities into the Digital Age

California Emerging Technology Fund invests \$260,000 in California Foundation for Independent Living Centers to provide discount home Internet, Digital Literacy training and low-cost computers

San Francisco and Sacramento— October 15, 2013 – The California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) and California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) today are launching a new statewide partnership to connect people with disabilities to affordable high-speed Internet at home and the tools they need to succeed in the Digital Age.

CETF is announcing a 2-year, \$260,000 grant to CFILC to launch Digital Access, an unprecedented initiative to help improve the lives of Californians with disabilities by providing access to broadband service, low-cost computing devices and Digital Literacy training. Digital Access will engage 40 organizations statewide to help more than 2,100 people with disabilities and their families subscribe to broadband at home for as little as \$10 a month.

Slightly more than half of Californians with disabilities have access to high-speed Internet at home, according to recent polling. With 60 percent of working-age persons with disabilities unemployed or underemployed, affordable universal access to broadband at home is crucial. Those without high-speed Internet access at home must deal with an obstacle course to reach public-use computers, which includes transportation barriers, lack of accessible software options and inaccessible locations.

“We are working to close the Digital Divide in California by accelerating the adoption of home broadband among those who can benefit most. An online connection is a link to opportunity for all Californians, and new assistive technologies are allowing Californians with disabilities to gain access to online educational, employment and civic engagement opportunities,” said CETF President and CEO Sunne Wright McPeak. “CFILC has strong connections to Independent Living Centers throughout the state, making them a critical conduit in connecting people with disabilities to affordable broadband service, training and computers.”

CFILC Executive Director Teresa Favuzzi said, “The return on investment for people with disabilities is significant, ranging from live streaming video and instant text communication that liberates people who are

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hard of hearing from the phone to software programs that read text and describe visual content aloud for the visually impaired. Attending classes remotely, online medical consultations and operating home Internet businesses eliminate the need for unnecessary trips or commutes and those with certain learning disabilities can access digital teaching tools.”

CLIFC will work with device lending libraries, which provide digital devices to people with disabilities throughout California, to "try before you buy" or to meet an unexpected or temporary access need. Broadband service and refurbished computer options will be offered as a part of digital device loans. The AT Network, reachable at atnet.org or toll-free at 800-390-2699, TTY: 800-900-0706, will be used to provide support and follow-up to organizations and individuals seeking to subscribe to broadband, purchase refurbished computers, and attend digital literacy training at accessible sites, as well as online training resources.

About California Emerging Technology Fund

The mission of CETF is to close the Digital Divide in California by breaking down barriers to high-speed Internet access at home through its ***Get Connected!*** campaigns and other initiatives. The goal is to reach 98% of all residences with broadband infrastructure and to achieve 80% home adoption by 2017. This statewide goal can only be accomplished if the following specific hard-to-reach target communities achieve at least a 70% adoption rate: low-income populations, Latino households, rural communities, and people with disabilities. For more information, visit www.cetfund.org and www.getconnectedtoday.com.

About California Foundation for Independent Living Centers

The mission of CFILC is to increase access and equal opportunity for People with Disabilities by building the capacity of Independent Living Centers. For more information, visit www.cfilc.org.