

EXAMPLE OF CHILD/YOUTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF STATE-LEVEL PROPOSAL

Developed by [Kids Impact Initiative](#) Re: Texas Broadband Development Office

Community leaders can adapt the focus and length of their assessment to fit their goals and capacity. Kids Impact Initiative would [value your feedback](#) on this “beta” version for a template.

Name of Proposal: SB 506 (Texas – 2021 Legislative Session)

Please provide a one- to two-sentence description of its key provisions and a link to the proposed policy.

This state-level legislation establishes a broadband development office in Texas state government and outlines the office’s responsibilities, including creating a broadband development map, a state broadband plan, a broadband development program to fund broadband activities, and an associated broadband development account. It also adds a member to the Governor’s Broadband Development Council from the broadband development office and expands the responsibilities of the Council.

This child impact assessment is based on the following version of SB 506:

<https://legiscan.com/TX/text/SB506/id/2265621/Texas-2021-SB506-Introduced.html>

SUMMARY OF CHILD/YOUTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Positive Impacts of Proposal on Children and Youth

If targeted to where the need is greatest, this proposal has the potential to significantly improve Texas children’s access to broadband, especially children living in rural areas, children of color, low-income children, and children with disabilities.

- Texas has the [largest population](#) in the nation of K-12 students who go without adequate internet connection.
- Only [50 percent](#) of children living in rural households currently have access to broadband and a computer, compared to 70 percent of children living in metropolitan areas.
- The majority of children in Texas are children of color; and children of color are less likely than White children to have access to affordable broadband.
- [Fifty-eight percent of Texas K-12 students](#) lack affordable broadband.
- The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) has highlighted the broadband and other technology needs of children with disabilities.

Potential Negative Impacts of Proposal on Children and Youth

The legislation does not call out the specific broadband needs of children, including children living in rural areas, children of color, low-income children, and children with disabilities. Nor does the legislation propose solutions to address the unique broadband needs of these children.

Ways to Minimize Potential Harm to Children and Youth

Language could be added to the legislation to accomplish the following:

- Identify and highlight the unique needs of Texas children, including rural children, children of color, low-income children, and children with disabilities;
- Implement and document strategies to address those needs; and
- Ensure that youth have a voice in decisions about broadband deployment in Texas that affect them.

Assessment Questions

1. What are the goals of the proposed policy, practice, or program?

The goal of the proposed policy is to implement strategies to deploy high-speed broadband to unserved areas across the state of Texas.

2. Is the proposal likely to have an impact on children and youth—either positive or negative?

Yes

If yes, explain how?

The proposal has the potential to have a significant positive impact on children. Texas has the [largest population](#) in the nation of K-12 students who go without adequate internet connection (1,829,000 or 34 percent). In addition, [58 percent of Texas K-12 students](#) lack affordable broadband. [One-third](#) of school-age children in Texas lack either broadband access or a computer.

3. Does the proposal have a disproportionate impact on children and youth who are Black, Latinx, Asian-American, Indigenous, or identify with other racial or ethnic groups?

Yes

If yes, which groups and how?

If targeted to where the need is greatest, this proposal could significantly improve digital equity for children and youth of color in Texas, especially given that the majority of children in Texas are children of color (e.g., [49 percent of children in Texas are Hispanic, and 12 percent are Black](#)). Latinx students are less likely than White students to have access to both broadband and a computer ([59 percent vs. 78 percent](#)), a gap greater than the national rate. Black students also have less access to broadband and a computer than White students at [63 percent](#). Moreover, Black and Hispanic children are roughly [three times](#) more likely to live in poverty than White and Asian children, putting low-income Black and Hispanic children and youth at greater risk of lacking access to affordable high-speed broadband. (The use of the terms, Hispanic and Latinx, corresponds to how the terms are referenced in data sources.)

4. Does the proposal affect other groups of children and youth in particular, such as low-income children, youth with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, or youth in foster care?

Yes

If yes, which groups and how?

Rural and low-income children have more to gain from the proposal than other groups of children. Only [50 percent](#) of children living in rural households currently have access to broadband and a computer, compared to 70 percent of children living in metropolitan areas.

[Many low-income households](#) do not have the financial means to purchase high-speed internet services even when they are available. [Twenty-one percent](#) of children in Texas live in poverty, and children in Texas living below the poverty line are much less likely than their more affluent peers to have access to both affordable broadband and computers ([43 percent vs. 74 percent](#)).

Children and youth with disabilities could be left out of the potential benefits of the proposal if their broadband and other technology needs are ignored. The legislation does not address the broadband access and adoption needs of the [approximately 372,700](#) non-institutionalized children and youth with disabilities, ages 0 – 20, in Texas. The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) has highlighted the need to ensure online tools and computing devices are accessible and that those with disabilities have access to assistive technologies.

5. Are the needs of children and youth living in rural areas adequately addressed?

Unclear

Explain:

While children who live in rural communities are likely to benefit from broadband expansion, there is no explicit mention of addressing their needs for broadband at home, in schools, in pediatric clinics, and the like. Therefore, it is unclear whether their needs would be adequately addressed.

6. Does the proposal affect parents' ability to support their children's health and well-being? For example, does it impact employment opportunities, access to affordable transportation, quality child care, etc?

Yes

Explain:

With access to high-speed internet in homes as well as at schools, libraries, and other community sites, parents will be able to engage in essential online activities to support their children's education, health, and well-being. Examples include the ability to access health care services via telehealth, search and apply for jobs online, communicate with their children's schools online, connect to economic benefits and social services online, and take classes online.

Please identify particular impacts on the parents of children of color and other marginalized groups.

Because families of children of color, especially those with low incomes, are the least likely to have access to affordable high-speed broadband (and computing devices), they stand to gain the most from this proposal by having the internet connection they need to support their children's education, health, and well-being.

7. Does the proposal affect the institutions that are part of everyday life for children—for example, schools, local parks, transportation, or housing—especially for marginalized groups?

Yes

If yes, which institutions and how?

By expanding high-speed broadband into all schools, libraries, and other institutions that serve children and families as well as all households, the institutions that are meant to support children will be better equipped to do so. For example, these institutions will be better able to support children and families in participating in online learning, participating in telehealth visits, applying for jobs and college online, and linking to economic and social supports online. More specifically, this proposal could make a meaningful impact on the [more than 48,000 teachers](#) (13 percent) in Texas who lack adequate high-speed internet connection.

8. Did young people most affected by this proposal provide input into the proposal and/or this assessment?

No

If yes, how?

If no, why not?

One reason could be that youth are not represented on the Governor’s Broadband Development Council.

9. If applicable, what are ways to prevent or minimize negative impacts on children and youth resulting from the proposed policy or program?

Please include ways to prevent or minimize negative impacts of the proposal that disproportionately affect children and youth of color and other marginalized groups.

Unless there is a specific focus on children and the institutions that shape their lives, the benefits of this proposal could bypass large numbers of Texans who especially need them—including children of color, rural children, low-income children, and children with disabilities. To address this potential gap, language could be added to the legislation to accomplish the following:

- Identify and highlight the unique broadband needs of Texas children—including rural children, low-income children, children of color, and children with disabilities and/or special health and developmental needs—through broadband mapping and other strategies;
- Implement, monitor, and publicly report out on strategies and progress to address those needs;
- Ensure that youth—particularly youth of color, rural youth, low-income youth, and youth with disabilities—have a voice in decisions about broadband deployment in Texas;
- Support complementary policies that guarantee all Texas children, youth, and families have access to affordable computing devices; and
- Prioritize grants and other financial incentives to deploy broadband into neighborhoods with significant percentages of children of color, low-income families, rural families, and other marginalized groups.

10. Once implemented, will the policy be assessed over time for its actual impacts on children and youth, including marginalized groups?

Unclear

If yes, how?

While the legislation includes measures to monitor progress related to broadband deployment over time, there is no explicit charge to assess the impact of the proposed policy on children and youth, including marginalized groups.

Date completed: April 15, 2021

Name and affiliation of person who completed the assessment: Jane Doe, Texas Legislative Council
