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### Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce National Broadband Plan: Promoting Broadband Adoption Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet May 13, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on the National Broadband Plan's recommendations for greater broadband adoption.

I would first like to extend a welcome to the two Californians on today's panel. Rachelle Chong is here on behalf of California's Chief Information Officer. And Rivkah Sass is here on behalf of the Sacramento Public Library System. Thank you both for being here.

At our last hearing I mentioned the importance of broadband deployment to America's future. Today, we will hear testimony about efforts and proposals designed to address the other side of the broadband equation: broadband adoption. To put a number on just how important broadband adoption is, according to the Broadband Plan, 62 percent of American workers rely on the Internet to perform their jobs. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that jobs dependent on broadband will grow by 25 percent over the next 8 years, or 2 ½ times faster than the average growth across all occupations and industries. So when we talk about addressing adoption barriers, we are talking about addressing barriers to future economic growth and job growth.

The largest barrier identified by the Broadband Plan is cost. The Plan recommends addressing the cost barrier, in part, by expanding the Universal Service Fund's Lifeline and Link-Up program for low-income consumers. Congresswoman Matsui has long recognized that expanding Lifeline and Link-Up is an important, common-sense approach to encourage broadband adoption. Toward that end, in September of last year, she introduced H.R. 3646, the Broadband Affordability Act. I support her legislation and commend her for her leadership on this issue.

In addition to cost, the Plan identified a lack of digital literacy as a barrier to adoption. The Plan recommends promoting digital literacy through volunteer and other efforts to train those who need and want help. These proposals are worth pursuing.

If we are going to take full advantage of the benefits that broadband offers to the country, we will have to closely examine these two major issues for consumers: costs and digital literacy. I want to thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and our witnesses for being here.