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Rural LISC Awards The Elmore Bolling Initiative Pioneering Grant To Bridge the Digital Divide in South Central Alabama Black Belt Region

Black Rural Broadband Deserts Within the Alabama Black Belt to “Get Wired” with High Speed Internet Service

Lowndesboro, AL – The Elmore Bolling Initiative announces that it has received a significant award from Rural LISC to scale its community development advocacy work across the Alabama Black Belt region. The nonprofit organization will help accelerate GetWiredAlabama®, a public-private partnership between the South Central Alabama Broadband Cooperative District and Omnipoint Technology Partners, LLC to provide next generation, high-speed broadband to the 17 counties of the historic Black Belt. The Elmore Bolling Initiative will focus its efforts on digital equity and inclusion, including outreach campaigns that will demonstrate how community anchor organizations region-wide can help increase adoption and use of broadband infrastructure for economic and community development.

The Alabama Black Belt represents a timeless commitment to access to opportunity through Civil Rights meccas in Selma, Tuskegee, Marion, and Montgomery, and yet remains deeply underserved by the digital tools that have become central to modern life. The Elmore Bolling Initiative promotes the legacy of 1947 lynch victim, Elmore Bolling, who was an entrepreneur and philanthropist serving Lowndes County and other areas of Alabama.

“We are ecstatic to partner with Rural LISC in this significant community development project,” said Initiative founder and president, Josephine Bolling-McCall, who will manage the grant programs. “Fifty years after the struggle for racial equality, we want to bring digital equity to the residents and businesses of the Rural South.”

The Initiative will build a robust coalition of advocates and stakeholders to ensure that every Black Belt citizen has access to affordable and reliable connectivity, and has adequate digital skills and knowledge to make full use of the benefits of broadband internet and digital technology for education, work, health, financial and government service opportunities. As part of the Rural LISC award, the Initiative will promote a regional technology center partner network concept to provide digital skills training access across the region.

“Much like a food desert, a broadband desert can have a compounding negative impact on the health of the community,” said Charlie King, Jr., chair of the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners and president of the SCABC District. “These places are at a clear and distinct disadvantage to sustain optimally functioning businesses, schools, churches, libraries, community organizations and households. Now is our moment to change that story for our region.”

“The Rural LISC team is proud to partner with the Elmore Bolling Initiative to help provide meaningful connection to digital resources in south central Alabama,” said Caitlin Cain, LISC Vice President and Rural LISC Director. “A commitment to access and skill advancement is paramount to bridge the digital divide.”

About Rural LISC

Launched in 1995, Rural LISC is the rural component of LISC (Local Initiative Support Corporation), the largest community development support organization in the country. Through a partnership base of over 145 organizations spread across 49 states, Rural LISC provides a wide range of services, including financial support, training, technical assistance and capital resources to help rural community partners and developers invest in rural communities. To date, Rural LISC has leveraged nearly \$3.3 billion from public and private sources to produce 35,000 affordable homes and apartments. Rural LISC investments have also produced over 4 million square feet of commercial and community space, including 20 early childhood care centers. Rural LISC technical assistance has touched more than 700 businesses, resulting in over 12,000 jobs supported and/or retained. Rural LISC is committed to ensuring equity and investment in rural America. Learn more at www.lisc.org/rural.

About Elmore Bolling Initiative

Our mission is to preserve the legacy of Elmore Bolling in Lowndes County, Alabama by expanding awareness of Black history and empowering today’s citizens.

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