

## State and Local Digital Service Act of 2021 – ONE PAGER

*Aging and inadequate digital systems in state and local governments were already limiting access to basic government services and benefits before 2020 began. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed these outdated systems past their breaking point, resulting in delivery delays to unemployment insurance in at least 35 states, and other service outages, including broken or impossible to use vaccine registration websites in states across the country. Even when systems work as intended, many are inaccessible to the people they are intended to serve. For example, 15% of American adults rely on mobile phones to connect to the internet, but many government websites are not designed for mobile connections. The State and Local Digital Service Act provides guidance and funding for state and local governments to form digital service teams focused on delivering fair and effective public services.*

**Improved Processes, Time & Cost Savings:** Digital service teams have a proven record of successfully upgrading government systems, while saving taxpayer money. The United States Digital Service (USDS), has completed more than 100 projects since beginning in 2014, improving how the federal government serves veterans, small businesses, and families -- while saving taxpayers more than \$3.5 billion. Similarly, the 18F team within the Technology Transformation Service at the General Services Administration has acted as a strike force to help both federal and state clients create easy-to-use technologies in sectors ranging from healthcare access to land-use permitting. State efforts to deploy modern digital teams have shown similar benefits for users and taxpayers.

**What The Bill Does:** The State and Local Digital Service Act would provide an initial investment to establish digital service teams at the state and local level. These teams would focus on user-centered research and design as well as other modern digital product development techniques that enable ease of access to digital services and benefits. Examples of the output of these services include helping veterans apply for housing programs, providing easy-to-use online licensing forms for farmers, and offering decision makers timely COVID-19 guidance.

Specifically the bill would:

- Authorize \$120 million annually for 7 years for state and local digital service grants and planning grants administered by GSA, ranging from \$200,000 to \$3 million per year. These grants require a 10% cost share and 50% of the grant must be used for talent.
- Allow successful awardees to re-apply for additional grants to sustain their new teams.
- Restore public trust in government systems by funding new and existing teams of designers, technologists, and civil servants to focus on delivering user-centered digital services.
- Remove red tape to allow USDS, 18F, and other federal technology services to provide technical expertise to states and local government entities.

**Endorsements:** Center for Democracy and Technology, AnitaB.org, the Tech Talent Project, Bitwise Industries, NAVA Public Benefit Corporation, and the Public Interest Tech team and the New Practice Lab at New America