What do we talk about when we talk about broadband connectivity? For many years, the focus has been almost exclusively on supply-side issues – i.e., the extent to which broadband is being deployed and made available to households and businesses across the country. This is an essential conversation since access to a connection is necessary to providing users with the choice of whether or not to go online. But, as depicted in the following diagram, supply-side issues represent only half of the equation:

These issues interrelate in many respects. For example, broadband adoption rates have climbed in tandem with greater availability of broadband connections. Unfortunately, the suite of issues on the demand-side has been largely overshadowed by supply-side debates.

This is critical because overall take-rates have plateaued in recent years. Meanwhile, adoption rates in key demographic groups – older adults, African Americans, Hispanics, and low-income households – remain lower than overall rates despite significant progress.

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over the last few years\textsuperscript{2}, making clear that any discussion about digital equity should focus first and foremost on the demand-side.

As has been noted elsewhere, broadband adoption decisions are influenced by numerous factors.\textsuperscript{3} Indeed, the barriers that impede adoption tend to differ in subtle but important ways from group to group, underscoring that efforts to address these challenges resist one-size-fits-all solutions.\textsuperscript{4} Moreover, the notion of “digital literacy” is becoming ever more critical in this age of information overload, “fake news,” algorithmic decision-making, automation, invasive data collection techniques, and an overall saturation of technology beginning at a very young age. In short, there are many issues on the demand-side that would benefit from the same level of passion, engagement, and resources that issues on the supply-side have received in the recent past.

For these reasons, it is imperative that policymakers at every level of government prioritize digital equity, adoption and literacy (DEAL) issues, especially in areas that are already well-served by broadband. These issues have been overshadowed and under-resourced for far too long. Going forward, the ACLP at New York Law School, which has a long track-record of examining these issues and proposing workable solutions to them, will work to bring together a diverse coalition of experts in an effort to shine a spotlight on DEAL issues and, more importantly, help to shape policies that can move the needle on these issues in a meaningful and sustainable way.

\textsuperscript{2} Id.
