

March 4, 2021

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The undersigned 58 education and related national associations support the \$7 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund, contained in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, H.R. 1319, that would allow the Federal Communications Commission to provide one-time emergency support for schools and libraries to purchase technology and devices needed to provide home Internet connectivity through the E-rate program.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues and schools continue to adapt to in school, hybrid and remote learning, students and educators lacking Internet access are at great disadvantage, or worse, shut out of teaching and learning. According to a recent study, 12 million K-12 students continue to lack the Internet connectivity at home needed to complete schoolwork nearly a year into this pandemic.¹ They are caught in the cruelest aspect of the digital divide – the “homework gap” – because they are unable to participate in online learning, after-school enrichment, and programs that help address loss of opportunities to learn during this difficult time. Also, a disproportionate number of students lacking Internet access are Black, Brown or Indigenous, come from low-income households, and rural areas. These students are depending on schools and libraries to help bridge the homework gap.

Given the clear, demonstrated need and continuing crisis engendered by the pandemic, we ask the Senate to act with haste to appropriate \$7 billion in one-time, short-term emergency funding to the E-rate program as part of the America’s Rescue Plan Act of 2021. A program that schools and libraries know and trust, the E-rate is the quickest, most efficient, and most importantly, most *equitable way*, to disseminate funds to help schools and libraries connect K-12 students with Internet access and appropriate connected devices. Together, our nation’s schools and libraries can help close the homework gap, but they need targeted federal support and funding.

In closing, we urge Congress to act immediately to help solve this issue. As we wrote back in [April](#), [July](#), [November](#) and [December](#), *every day that passes is another that students go without ubiquitous access to teaching and learning. **Without specific, targeted funds to help students who do not have Internet access** - whether it is Internet service, devices or both – **we are denying students the fundamental right to an education.***

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Advance CTE
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Federation of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
American Library Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association

¹ See Common Sense Media’s report on [“Looking Back, Looking Forward: What it will take to permanently close the K-12 Digital Divide.”](#)

ASCD
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Children's Health Fund
Code.org
Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Committee for Children
Common Sense
CoSN - Consortium for School Networking
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Chief State School Officers
Education Reform Now
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
IDEA Public Schools
International Society for Technology in Education
Joint National Committee for Languages
KIPP
Learning Forward
Magnet Schools of America
MENTOR National
National Association for Music Education (NAfME)
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of Independent Schools
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Catholic Educational Association
National Council for Languages and International Studies
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
Project Tomorrow
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Stand for Children
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)
Teach for America
The Education Trust
USCCB, Committee on Catholic Education