

The Hon. Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2463 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2020

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned 60 education and related national associations **urge Congress to include in an emergency COVID-19 package the provisions in the HEROES Act 2.0 (H.R. 925), that would establish an “Emergency Connectivity Fund” to provide \$12 billion to schools and libraries to ensure that students and educators have Internet access from home and appropriate connectivity devices.**

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt teaching and learning across the country. In the last week, the escalating number of COVID cases has caused countless individual schools and entire school districts to close buildings and revert to fully remote learning.¹ When this pandemic began last spring, it exposed plainly the 15-16 million K-12 students and some 400,000 educators who lacked access to the connectivity and technology needed to teach and learn from home during this pandemic. Common Sense Media’s recent report, which is based on 2018 data, found that 37% of rural students and 21% of urban students lacked home Internet access. Additionally, the report stated that 35% of Native American students, 30% of Black students, and 26% of Latinx students had inadequate Internet access at home compared to only 18% of White students.² A second report from the Alliance for Excellent Education revealed that one in three families who earn between \$25,000 and \$50,000 do not have high speed home Internet.³ Finally, a third report from the National Education Association, issued just last month, found that 25% of all school-aged students live in households without broadband access or web-enabled devices (such as a computer or tablet).⁴

Given this clear, demonstrated need and the continuing educational crisis engendered by the pandemic, we assert that it is incumbent upon Congress to appropriate \$12 billion in short-term emergency funding to the Federal Communication Commission’s long-standing E-rate Program, as called for in the House passed HEROES Act 2.0. A program that schools know and trust, the E-rate

¹ States reporting school closures in the last week in response to the spike in COVID-19 cases include, but are not limited to: Alabama, Connecticut, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Ohio, New York, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Wisconsin.

² See Common Sense Media’s report [“Closing the K-12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning.”](#)

³ See the Alliance for Excellent Education’s “Students of Color Caught in the Homework Gap” (Alliance for Excellent Education, National Indian Education Association, National Urban League, and Unidos US, 2020).

⁴ See the National Education Association’s report on [“The Digital Divide and the Homework Gap in Your State.”](#)

is the quickest, most efficient and, most importantly, most *equitable way*, to disseminate the funds to public and private schools and public libraries to help ensure K-12 students have Internet access from home and appropriate connection devices.

Congress must face up to this issue right now. As we wrote back in [April](#) and again in [July](#), *time is of the essence*. Every day that passes is another that students lacking remote access to school fall further behind. Additionally, many school districts are using online learning to deliver virtual access to after-school, enrichment and learning loss programs. **Without specific, targeted funds to help students who do not have Internet access at home** - 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 Library Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
ASCD
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of School Business Officials International
Children's Health Fund
Code.org
Committee for Children
Common Sense
Computer Science Teachers Association
CoSN - the Consortium for School Networking
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Chief State School Officers
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
IDEA Public Schools
Institute for Educational Leadership
International Society for Technology in Education
Joint National Committee for Languages
KIPP
Learning Forward
Magnet Schools of America
MENTOR
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
National Catholic Educational Association
National Center for Families Learning
National Council for Languages and International Studies
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Education Association
National League of Cities
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
National Science Teaching Association
Parents as Teachers
Project Tomorrow
Public Advocacy for Kids
SETDA (State Educational Technology Directors Association)
Stand for Children
Teach For America
The Education Trust
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

cc: The Hon. Roger Wicker, Chairman, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
The Hon. Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
The Hon. Frank Pallone, Chairman, House Committee on Energy & Commerce
The Hon. Greg Walden, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. Senate
U.S. House of Representatives