

The Hon. Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United State Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Bernie Sanders  
Chairman  
United States Senate Committee  
on the Budget  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
United States Senate Committee on  
Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
Washington, D.C. 20510

August 16, 2021

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Chair Cantwell, and Chairman Sanders:

The undersigned K-12 education and library associations write today to urge you to include within the forthcoming Budget Reconciliation Act follow-on funding to ensure continued home connectivity for K-12 students, educators, and library patrons. Specifically, we request that the Budget Reconciliation Act incorporate language from and funding for the Securing Universal Communications Connectivity to Ensure Students Succeed (SUCCESS) Act (S. 2447/HR 4663), legislation that would add funding to the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF), which was authorized and funded under the American Rescue Plan Act.

We are very appreciative of Congress authorizing and appropriating \$7.17 billion for ECF, which will allow schools and libraries to purchase connected devices and home Internet access services to help bridge the homework gap. Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, as many as 16 million students and 400,000 educators lacked access to appropriate computers and/or home Internet access service. This prevented them from completing homework assignments, conducting online research, communicating with their peers and educators, applying for jobs and college, and accessing governmental services. When nearly all school buildings closed in March 2020, this homework gap became an education gap with millions of students – disproportionately Black or Brown, low-income, or rural – unable to participate in their classes which had moved online.

While ECF funding will help close this homework gap, we are extremely concerned that students, teachers, and library patrons connected through these dollars will have their home Internet access cut-off when these funds run dry. Should that occur, students could find their online courses interrupted, their research projects and homework assignments impossible to complete, and their relationships with educators and peers shut down. Library patrons would lose critical connections to work and healthcare, as well as remote learning. Providing additional funding now to the existing ECF program – as the SUCCESS Act proposes – would go a long way towards preventing the occurrence of this nightmare scenario and allow school districts and library systems to plan further into the future.

For all of these reasons, we urge Congress to go beyond this initial ECF investment and include sufficient funding within the forthcoming Budget Reconciliation Act. Common Sense Media's most recent study found that it will cost between \$4 billion and \$8 billion annually to ensure that all K-12 students have a connected device appropriate for education and home Internet access service. The SUCCESS Act reflects this level of investment, and its enactment would sustain ECF for five more years. Therefore, we request that Congress incorporate this timely and much needed legislation in the forthcoming Budget Reconciliation Bill.

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and look forward to continuing to work with you on this significant problem.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents' Association  
Advance CTE  
Afterschool Alliance  
Alliance for Excellent Education  
American Federation of School Administrators  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Library Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association for Career and Technical Education  
Association of Educational Service Agencies  
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents  
Association of School Business Officials International  
Children's Health Fund  
Common Sense Media  
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  
Girls Inc.  
International Society for Technology in Education  
Joint National Committee for Languages  
KIPP Public Schools  
Magnet Schools of America  
MENTOR  
National Association for Pupil Transportation  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools  
National Association of Independent Schools

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 Committee for Languages and International Studies  
National Council of Teachers of English  
National Council for the Social Studies  
National Education Association  
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium  
National Rural Education Association  
National School Boards Association  
NCTE, National Council of Teachers of English  
Project Tomorrow  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)  
Teach for America  
The Education Trust