June 21, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

We write with deep concern that funding for the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) — which provides students and educators with access to home broadband and Internet-connected devices — will soon be exhausted. Over the past year, the ECF has helped more than 12.5 million students connect to the Internet. In May, however, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that it received $2.8 billion in applications for ECF funds in the third application window, nearly double the roughly $1.5 billion remaining in the program.[1] As a result, millions of students could be disconnected from the Internet. We ask you to work with us to prevent this exacerbation of the digital divide by replenishing the ECF funding as soon as possible.

The Emergency Connectivity Fund represents a long-overdue investment in our students and educators who lack access to high-speed broadband — a problem that long predates the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 16 million K-12 students and up to 400,000 educators did not have adequate Internet connectivity to teach and learn from home.[2] Moreover, research indicates that the homework gap cuts deeply across socioeconomic lines, with 37 percent of rural Americans, 35 percent of students from households with annual incomes below $30,000, 25 percent of African-American households with school-age children, and 23 percent of Hispanic households with school-age children lacking access to high-speed Internet at home.[3] Due to this homework gap, millions of students are unable to complete online homework assignments and research, communicate with their teachers, collaborate with their peers, and apply to college or for jobs and government services.

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[1] Press Release, Federal Communications Commission, FCC Announces Over $2.8 Billion In Funding Requests For Final Window In Ongoing Work To Close The Homework Gap (May 25, 2022), https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-announces-over-28-billion-final-ecf-funding-requests.

[2] COMMON SENSE MEDIA, CLOSING THE K-12 DIGITAL DIVIDE IN THE AGE OF DISTANCE LEARNING (2020), https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/featured-content/files/common_sense_media_report_final_7_1_3pm_web.pdf.

[3] *See* Monica Anderson & Andrew Perrin, PEW RESEARCH CENTER, *Nearly one-in-five teens can't always finish their homework because of the digital divide* (Oct. 26, 2018), https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/.

When COVID-19 forced most schools in the United States to turn to remote learning, the homework gap became an education gap for students lacking the home broadband and devices necessary to attend online classes. Congress responded to this crisis by passing the Emergency Connectivity Fund as part of the *American Rescue Plan*, bridging the homework gap for many students and educators. Schools and libraries have received over $4.8 billion through the program, which they have used to subsidize the purchase of more than 10 million devices and 5 million home broadband connections.[4] In total, the ECF has connected more than 12.5 million students to the Internet. To maintain this impressive progress in closing the homework gap, schools and libraries requested another $2.8 billion for next school year. Unfortunately, with only an estimated $1.5 billion remaining, the ECF will be unable to meet that demand.

The ECF has made significant strides toward closing the homework gap. We are deeply concerned that those gains will dissipate when ECF funding runs out. With no additional federal funding, schools and libraries nationwide will face the difficult choice of finding unbudgeted funding to maintain home broadband connections for those students connected with ECF dollars or ceasing payment on those broadband bills and watching student broadband connections blink off — perhaps permanently.

To avoid this great disconnection and prevent the reversal of ECF's hard-earned gains in closing the homework gap for so many rural, low-income, Black, Brown, Hispanic, Latino, Asian American, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students and their teachers, we urge you to work with us to identify and seize opportunities to provide additional funding for the Emergency Connectivity Fund. With the new school year just a few months away, we cannot allow millions of students to lose access to high-speed broadband.

Sincerely,

/s/
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/
Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/
Cory Booker
United States Senator

[4] Press Release, Federal Communications Commission, *supra* note 1.

/s/
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/
Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

/s/
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/
Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

/s/
Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

/s/
Alex Padilla
United States Senator

/s/
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/
Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

/s/
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/
Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/
Alma Adams
Member of Congress

/s/
Nanette Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

/s/
Jamaal Bowman
Member of Congress

/s/
Anthony Brown
Member of Congress

/s/
Shontel Brown
Member of Congress

/s/
Andre Carson
Member of Congress

/s/
Sean Casten
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress

/s/
Judy Chu
Member of Congress

/s/
Lou Correa
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/
Sharice Davids
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/
Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
Ron Kind
Member of Congress

/s/
Al Lawson
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress

/s/
Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

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Kathy Manning
Member of Congress

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Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

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Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

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Jim McGovern
Member of Congress

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Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

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Joseph Morelle
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Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

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Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

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Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

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Adam Schiff
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David Scott
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Thomas Suozzi
Member of Congress

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Rashida Tlaib
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David Trone
Member of Congress

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Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

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Nydia Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/
Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

/s/
Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress

/s/
John Yarmuth
Member of Congress