

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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).<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> 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 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

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