

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

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Hon. Frank Pallone
Chairman
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 7, 2021

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Chair Cantwell, and Chairman Pallone:

The undersigned K-12 education and library associations write today to urge you to include within the forthcoming Build Back Better Act at least \$4 billion to ensure that more than 5 million students, teachers and library patrons can maintain their home broadband connections beyond June 30, 2022. We hope that Congress will follow the lead of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has already approved that sum in its section of the Build Back Better Act.

Our organizations remain very appreciative of Congress authorizing and appropriating \$7.17 billion for the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) in the American Rescue Plan Act. Right now, schools and libraries are using these funds to purchase connected devices and home Internet access services to help bridge the pernicious home connectivity gap that afflicted as many as 16 million students and 400,000 educators before COVID began. This so-called homework gap disproportionately affects Black, Brown, low-income, and rural students, making it difficult for them to carry on their studies.

We were pleased to see that demand for ECF has been extraordinarily high. Despite the Federal Communications Commission opening an initial 45-day application window over the summer, when schools were in recess and many were on vacation, schools and libraries applied for \$5.1 billion in ECF support, more than 70% of available funds. This funding paid for 9.1 million connected devices and 5.4 million broadband connections, with applications coming from every US state and territory. We anticipate that the remaining funds will be fully exhausted following next week's closure of the second application window.

While ECF funding is making incredible inroads in closing the homework gap, that funding only provides support for home broadband connections until June 30, 2022. When that funding ends, the home broadband connections established will have to terminate unless additional funding is provided. Should these home broadband connections be cut-off, 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. For all of these reasons, we urge Congress to include \$4 billion in additional ECF funding within the forthcoming Build Back Better Act.

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
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Federation of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
American Library Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor 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
Code.org
Common Sense Media
Consortium for School Networking
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Chief State School Officers
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
First Focus Campaign for Children
Girls Inc.
Girl Scouts of the USA
Institute for Educational Leadership
International Society for Technology in Education
Joint National Committee for Languages
Khan Academy
KIPP Public Schools
Learning Forward
Magnet Schools of America
MENTOR
National Association for Pupil Transportation
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

National Association of Independent Schools
National Association of Pupil Transportation
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 Committee for Languages and International Studies
National Council for Teachers of Mathematics
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
Parents as Teachers
Project Tomorrow
Public Advocacy for Kids
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)
The Education Trust