

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
1-1-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

Thank you for the inclusion of broadband and telehealth provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to support American workers, students, and patients who face being disconnected from essential services and information during this crisis. The lack of internet access was already a problem for millions of Americans, and the COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated the situation.

Over the last several weeks, our offices have heard countless stories from our constituents who are unable to telework, support their children's virtual education, consult with doctors, connect with loved ones, or receive essential services because of the lack of broadband connectivity or affordability in their community. More than 30 million Americans have filed for unemployment since the pandemic started and schools across the country have closed and cancelled classes to slow the spread of COVID-19. We therefore believe that future stimulus packages should support the deployment of secure and resilient broadband, provide hotspots for students to close the homework gap and allow for distance learning, and expand access and affordability for unserved and underserved communities with sufficient speed and data that reflects American families' increased reliance on internet access.

We believe that in the response to the COVID-19 crisis an overall investment of at least \$86 billion is needed. This would expedite high-speed broadband deployment and expand funding to ensure that Americans who need broadband service can remain connected during this public health crisis and recovery. This should include emergency broadband benefits for low-income consumers that meet the demands of telework, telehealth and telelearning.

Setting up and successfully utilizing distance learning tools can be a challenge in the best of times, but the Coronavirus has placed an added urgency in ensuring all students can connect to digital education resources. We believe an emergency expansion of the E-Rate educational connectivity programs is needed to help schools connect students that do not have a home Internet connection, digital equipment, or cannot access school and community facilities (libraries, recreation centers). While we employ interim measures to address the immediate need and bridge the connectivity gap, we must also invest in the high-speed broadband deployment necessary to reach every unserved and underserved American family, hospital, school and small business. It is important that we protect taxpayer dollars and ensure federal resources are used efficiently by leveraging competition to connect all Americans to future-proof broadband networks. We should also continue to support robust funding in Rural Utility Service (RUS) programs like the ReConnect Program, Telecommunication Infrastructure Loans and Loan Guarantees, Community Connect Grants, and Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants. If we fail to invest now, millions of American will be disconnected from the economic recovery on the other side of this crisis.

For these programs to be most effective, coordination among federal agencies is necessary to streamline the application process for assistance from federal programs and to ensure broadband-related support is being administered in an efficient, technology-neutral, and financially sustainable manner. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it increasingly clear that having access to high speed broadband is a necessity. We must invest in expanding affordable and reliable high-speed Internet access in the next emergency relief package. We thank you for your attention to this critical issue and looking forward to working in tandem to bring broadband to communities that are in desperate need of this essential tool for life in the 21st Century.

Sincerely,



David Trone
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

/s/
James E. Clyburn
Member of Congress

/s/
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/
Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

/s/
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/
André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/
Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

/s/
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

/s/
TJ Cox
Member of Congress

/s/
Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

/s/
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/
Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

/s/
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/
Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

/s/
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

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Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

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Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

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Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

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Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

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Jim Costa
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/s/
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

/s/
Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

/s/
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/
Gregorio Kilili Camacho
Sablan
Member of Congress

/s/
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress

/s/
Angie Craig
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

/s/
Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
Michael F.Q. San Nicolas
Member of Congress

/s/
Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter Welch
Member of Congress

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Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

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Vicente Gonzalez
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John B. Larson
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Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

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Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

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Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

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Deb Haaland
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
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Joaquin Castro
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Lori Trahan
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Ro Khanna
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Linda T. Sánchez
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Darren Soto
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Cedric L. Richmond
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Alan Lowenthal
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Ayanna Pressley
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David N. Cicilline
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Jimmy Panetta
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William R. Keating
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Dwight Evans
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Joe Cunningham
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Antonio Delgado
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Mark Pocan
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Diana DeGette
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Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress