



February 27, 2020

## **FACT SHEET: The Homework Gap Trust Fund Act**

*Introduced by Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)*

### **The Problem**

- According to the Senate Joint Economic Committee, as many as 12 million students do not have access to the internet at home.<sup>i</sup>
- Approximately 70% of teachers assign homework that requires internet access outside of school<sup>ii</sup>, however 18% of students do not have access to the internet at home and 17% do not have a home computer.<sup>iii</sup>
- This lack of internet access at home is referred to as the “homework gap.”
- The homework gap disproportionately impacts lower-income students and students of color.
- The homework gap affects students in both urban and rural communities.
- In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission found that the lack of internet access at home puts students at a competitive disadvantage and can lead to reduced academic preparedness, decreased academic performance, and decreased classroom engagement among students.<sup>iv</sup>
- Students without internet access at home consistently score lower in reading, math and science.<sup>v</sup>

### **The Solution**

The upcoming c-band midband spectrum auction provides a unique opportunity to eliminate the homework gap. Some of the estimated revenue from the c-band spectrum auction should be used to fund priorities that will help close the digital divide.

The Homework Gap Trust Fund Act would use revenue from the c-band auction to establish a \$2-\$4 billion Homework Gap Trust Fund administered by the FCC. The funds can be used by jurisdictions to purchase wireless devices and support other initiatives to ensure students have access to the internet and the necessary skills to compete in the digital age.

Endorsed by: The American Federation of Teachers, The National Education Association, The National Rural Education Association, Maryland State Education Association, Prince George’s County Maryland Government, AFT-Maryland

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/2018/12/axios-the-homework-gap-12-million-schoolchildren-lack-internet>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://neatoday.org/2016/04/20/the-homework-gap/>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-releases-lifeline-reform-and-modernization-item>

<sup>v</sup> <https://equitablegrowth.org/closing-the-homework-gap-why-accessibility-to-high-quality-broadband-matters-to-u-s-schoolchildren/>