## Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515

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. 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. 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. Due to this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> COMMON SENSE MEDIA, CLOSING THE K-12 DIGITAL DIVIDE IN THE AGE OF DISTANCE LEARNING (2020), <a href="https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/featured-content/files/common sense media report final 7 1 3pm web.pdf">https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/featured-content/files/common sense media report final 7 1 3pm web.pdf</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> 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), <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/">https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/</a>.

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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.

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. 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.

/s/	/s/	
Edward J. Markey	Chris Van Hollen	
United States Senator	United States Senator	
/s/	/s/	
Grace Meng	Tammy Baldwin	
Member of Congress	United States Senator	

Sincerely,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Press Release, Federal Communications Commission, *supra* note 1.

/s/	/s/
Richard Blumenthal	Cory Booker
United States Senator	United States Senator
Robert P. Casey, Jr.	/s/
	Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator	United States Senator
/s/	/s/
Richard J. Durbin	Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator	United States Senator
<u>/s/</u>	/s/ Martin Heinrich
Kirsten Gillibrand	Martin Heinrich
United States Senator	United States Senator
/s/	/s/ Amy Klobuchar
Mazie Hirono	Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator	United States Senator
/s/	/s/
/s/ Ben Ray Luján	Jeff Merkley
United States Senator	United States Senator
/s/	/s/
Alex Padilla	Jacky Rosen
United States Senator	United States Senator

/s/	/s/
Bernard Sanders	Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator	United States Senator
/s/	/s/
Tina Smith	Raphael Warnock
United States Senator	United States Senator
/s/	/s/
Elizabeth Warren	Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator	United States Senator
/s/	<u>/s/</u>
Ron Wyden	Alma Adams
United States Senator	Member of Congress
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Nanette Barragán	Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
/s/	/s/
Jamaal Bowman	Anthony Brown
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
/s/	/s/
Shontel Brown	Andre Carson
Member of Congress	Member of Congress

/s/	/s/
Sean Casten	Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
<u>/s/</u>	/s/
Judy Chu	Lou Correa
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
/s/	/s/
Jim Costa	Sharice Davids
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
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Debbie Dingell	Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
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Josh Gottheimer	Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
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Brian Higgins	Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
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Ron Kind	Al Lawson
Member of Congress	Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee	Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
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Carolyn Maloney	Kathy Manning
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Lucy McBath	Betty McCollum
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Jim McGovern	
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Joseph Morelle	/s/ Jerrold Nadler
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Moule Do con	Jamie Raskin
Mark Pocan	
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/s/	/s/
Adam Schiff	David Scott
Member of Congress	Member of Congress

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/s/	/s/
Thomas Suozzi	Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
/s/	/s/
David Trone	Marc Veasey
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
/s/	/s/
Nydia Velázquez	Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
/s/	/s/
Nikema Williams	Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress	Member of Congress
/s/	_
John Yarmuth	
Member of Congress	