

December 8, 2020

Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Bill Cassidy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Susan Collins
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Angus King
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Joe Manchin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mitt Romney
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mark Warner
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear leaders McConnell, Schumer, Pelosi and McCarthy, and Senators Cassidy, Collins, King, Manchin, Murkowski, Romney, Shaheen and Warner,

We, the undersigned groups representing public interest, government, civil rights, labor, and rural advocacy groups, urge you to fund a federal broadband subsidy in forthcoming COVID-19 stimulus legislation. Tens of millions of people in the U.S. are facing economic hardship during the pandemic and still do not have broadband internet at home, leaving them unable to safely access nearly every facet of daily life during the pandemic, including healthcare, school, commerce, work, entertainment, and virtual social activities. With areas across the country seeing a dramatic increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, many states and localities are still encouraging residents to stay at home. In order to ensure that Americans can afford to access broadband service to engage in these vital activities during the pandemic, Congress must take action.

Even before the pandemic, millions of people in the U.S. did not have access to broadband. Low-income families, rural residents, and people of color are particularly impacted because of the high price of connectivity. During the pandemic, many more Americans find themselves unable to afford broadband because of the financial impacts of COVID-19. [Thirty percent](#) of low-income Black, Hispanic, and people of color say that they have missed an internet payment since the pandemic started, and half of low-income people of color are worried about being able to pay their broadband and phone bills over the coming months.

We understand that current stimulus proposals may include funding for broadband deployment and some suggestion that states could also use this money for adoption programs, but that they would not provide a federal broadband subsidy. While universal deployment is important, high prices are the most significant and immediate barrier to bridging this connectivity divide. Promoting affordability through the stimulus package will ensure that people get connected now.

The United States House of Representatives has already acted twice to help ensure that everyone has access to an affordable broadband connection. By passing the HEROES Act, the House voted to help low-income families and those financially impacted by COVID-19 afford broadband by providing them with a \$50 subsidy, and to prohibit internet service providers from disconnecting customers unable to pay their bills. Now, the Senate *must* take action if they want communities to connect to broadband.

Everyone needs broadband internet service during this unprecedented crisis. That is why the Senate must act to include policies that support broadband adoption in stimulus legislation. We urge Congress to not overlook the fact that providing a broadband subsidy will quickly connect millions of people to this vital service. It is, perhaps, the single most impactful way to get our communities connected during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

Access Now

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Benton Institute for Broadband & Society

California Center for Rural Policy

Center for Rural Strategies

Common Cause

Communications Workers of America

Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel

Consumer Reports

Detroit Community Technology Project

Fight for the Future

Free Press Action

Higher Learning Advocates

Highlander Research and Education Center

Institute for Intellectual Property and Social Justice
Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA)
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Martinez Street Women's Center
Media Alliance
MediaJustice
Movement Alliance Project
NAACP
NTEN
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low income clients
National Digital Inclusion Alliance
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National League of Cities
Native Public Media
New America's Open Technology Institute
Next Century Cities
Open Access Connections
OpenMedia
Pennsylvania Utility Law Project, on behalf of its low income clients
Public Knowledge
Public Utility Law Project of New York
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition
The Greenlining Institute
Together for Hope
Tribal Digital Village Network
United Church of Christ, OC Inc.