



September 9, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

We write to urge you to include \$40 billion over the next five years in continued funding for the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) in the upcoming Budget Reconciliation Act as proposed by the Securing Universal Communications Connectivity to Ensure Students Succeed (SUCCESS) Act (H.R.4663/S. 2447).

For too long, the digital divide for students, often referred to as the Homework Gap, has undercut educational opportunities for students of color and those living in low-income households. The Alliance for Excellent Education, National Indian Education Association, National Urban League, and UnidosUS released an [analysis in 2020](#) that found one in three Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native families did not have high-speed home internet access prior to the pandemic. Across all races and ethnicities, nearly 17 million children nationwide did not have the high-speed home internet access needed to fully participate in online learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic shined a spotlight on the Homework Gap and created a sense of urgency to address it. In response, Congress created the Emergency Connectivity Fund and provided over \$7 billion to ensure our students have the high-speed home internet access and connected devices needed to engage in learning. Within the first 45-day application window, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reports that school districts and libraries have submitted funding requests amounting to more than 70% of these funds, which would support internet connections for more than 5 million students and educators. The remaining funds will likely be requested in the FCC's next application window which begins on September 28. Unless Congress extends funding for ECF as proposed by the SUCCESS Act, these students and educators will lose their internet access when these funds expire in July 2022. We cannot allow this to happen, especially at a time when students need every opportunity to recover from the academic and social/emotional impacts of the pandemic.

The fact that families of color and children living in poverty are less likely to have the technology needed to engage in education is one of the many injustices resulting from our nation's long history of policies and practices rooted in prejudice. As stated in our report:

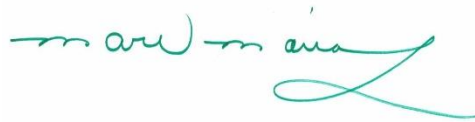
America's racial inequities stem from 400 years of systemic racism and federally sanctioned discriminatory policies born from this nation's original sins—the enslavement of Black people and the disenfranchisement and forced relocation of American Indian/Alaska Native communities. The fact that Black Americans were not allowed to read; immigrant children were denied equal access to a free public education; and that Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native communities were excluded from economic opportunities have had lingering effects on current generations: subpar education, low-wage jobs, and the lack of available or affordable broadband options to allow children to engage in distance learning.

High-speed home internet is as important to learning today as traditional textbooks have been for decades. ECF will narrow the Homework Gap during the 2021-2022 school year; it would be unconscionable to take away students' internet access the following school year. Therefore, we urge you to include \$40 billion over the next five years in continued ECF funding in the Budget Reconciliation Act. With your support, we can provide children who have been placed furthest from opportunity with every chance to succeed.

Sincerely,



Deborah S. Delisle
President and CEO
Alliance for Excellent Education



Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League



Janet Murguía
President and CEO
UnidosUS



Diana Cournoyer
Executive Director
National Indian Education Association