

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20510

April 6, 2020

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to urge you to include dedicated funding in any future legislation to help ensure small broadband providers can keep students and low-income families connected during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Many students and low-income families are facing financial hardships due to the pandemic need assistance from small broadband providers—many of which have already committed to sustain critical internet services and provide upgrades to ensure that the most vulnerable among us stay connected.

In recent weeks, unemployment claims have surged,<sup>[1]</sup> and schools across the country have closed in an effort to limit the spread of coronavirus,<sup>[2]</sup> leaving many Americans—including low-income families and students—without critical internet connectivity. Many small broadband providers have committed to continue providing voice and broadband services and upgrades despite ongoing economic hardships facing many Americans. Small providers—which contribute to more than 77,000 jobs and support more than \$10 billion in economic activity in the United States—<sup>[3]</sup> may be unable to sustain services if customers are unable to pay for a prolonged period of time, jeopardizing broadband connectivity for customers all across this country. Without action from Congress, small providers may be unable to continue to help ensure that the communities they serve can access distance learning and telehealth services.

It is for this reason that we introduced the bipartisan Keeping Critical Connections Act, which now has 11 cosponsors in the House and 17 in the Senate. While the third coronavirus relief

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<sup>[1]</sup> Rainey, Rebecca and McCaskill, Nolan D. (2020, April 2) 'No words for this': 10 million workers file jobless claims in just two weeks. Politico. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/02/unemployment-claims-coronavirus-pandemic-161081>

<sup>[2]</sup> Education Week. (2020, April 5) Map: Coronavirus and School Closures. Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-coronavirus-and-school-closures.html>

<sup>[3]</sup> Gallardo, Roberto and Kumar, Indraneel. (2019, August). *Job Creation from Rural Broadband Companies*. Purdue University. Retrieved from <https://www.ntca.org/ruralischool/newsroom/press-releases/2019/6/rural-broadband-powers-thousands-jobs-and-billions>

package included funding for rural broadband deployment, it did not include funding to help small broadband providers sustain services and upgrades for students and low-income families. We now urge you to include funding in the next expected relief package for a temporary emergency relief fund at the Federal Communications Commission to help small broadband providers continue these critical services for students and low-income families throughout the pandemic.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We stand ready to work with you to help small broadband companies keep communities connected at this critical time.

Sincerely,



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator



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Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



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Roger Marshall, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Todd Young  
United States Senator



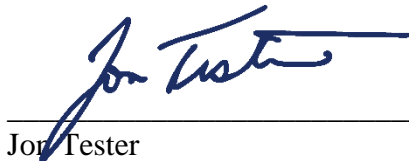
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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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John Hoeven  
United States Senator



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Jon Tester  
United States Senator



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Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



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Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



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Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



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Anthony Brindisi  
Member of Congress



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Robert J. Wittman  
Member of Congress



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Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



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Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Gregory F. Murphy, M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Troy Balderson  
Member of Congress



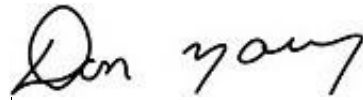
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Steve Watkins  
Member of Congress



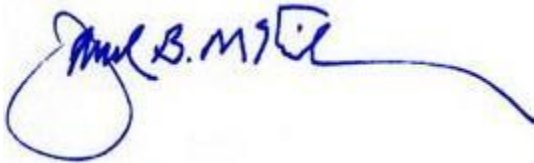
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Elise Stefanik  
Member of Congress



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Don Young  
Member of Congress



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David B. McKinley, P.E.  
Member of Congress