

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
House of Representatives
1326 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
326 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McCarthy, Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

The undersigned public and private education associations write to provide our strong endorsement of provisions related to delivering remote and distance learning through the E-Rate program in the Speaker's Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act. Public and private schools throughout the country urgently need federal support to ensure continuity of K-12 learning during this COVID-19 national emergency and we believe that these provisions will be critical to addressing this issue.

Specifically, **we endorse this bill's proposal to establish an Emergency Connectivity Fund to provide \$2 billion to schools and libraries for Wi-Fi hotspots, connected devices and mobile broadband Internet service.** Further, we support siting this Fund within the existing Universal Service Fund and administering it through the E-Rate program. The E-Rate program's administrator has vast experience with disseminating funds to schools and libraries through its 22-year stewardship of the E-Rate program and certainly can handle processing \$2 billion in funding requests promptly and effectively as it has done for many years. Finally, we support the bill's expedited timeline for the Federal Communications Commission to promulgate new rules associated with the Emergency Connectivity Fund as time is clearly of the essence to get all of America's students online and learning again.

The COVID-19 national emergency has struck the K-12 public and private education systems especially hard. According to EdWeek, to date 46 states have closed their school buildings for at least some period of time, with Kansas and Virginia already deciding to close them for the remainder of the year. Even in the states that have not opted to close yet, many school districts have closed their buildings. In sum, according to EdWeek, 121,000 US public and private school buildings are closed currently, affecting at least 54.5 million students.

Instead of ceasing learning for the remainder of this school year, public and private schools are attempting to transition their regular classrooms online. They are making use of communications services to conduct synchronous and asynchronous classes online and learning management systems to post videos, assignments and tests. Unfortunately, as has been clear for many years in frequent conversations about the so-called "homework gap", not all of America's students or teachers have the Internet connectivity in their homes or even the computing devices necessary to continue teaching and learning. Indeed, recent studies suggest that between 7 million and 12 million students have no Internet access at home and only 1 out of 4 school districts indicate they currently offer loaner hotspots. This is making it impossible for too many students to continue their school year while their connected peers

move forward with their studies. Over the past few weeks, reports have surfaced of schools and entire school districts citing the issue of equity in their decisions to provide no online learning to any students because not all students are connected. The Emergency Connectivity Fund will help solve many of these problems.

We appreciate your hard work in supporting our nation's students in the face of this extraordinary worldwide crisis.

Sincerely,

AASA: The School Superintendents Association
American Federation of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
Association of Education Service Agencies
Association of School Business Officials International
Consortium for School Networking
Council of Chief State School Officers
International Society for Technology in Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Independent Schools
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Catholic Educational Association
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Association
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National School Boards Association
State Educational Technology Directors Association
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Secretariat of Catholic Education