

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

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

June 17, 2020

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

When college campuses closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students lost more than access to lecture halls and student unions; they lost stable housing, reliable sources of food, and connectivity to the internet for their learning. Our 60 organizations write together today to urge you to support the technology needs of today's students in college in response to the ongoing national health crisis and in light of the continuing uncertain landscape for colleges and universities in the fall semester.

Access to technology is crucial for today's college students—96 percent of students report using the internet for school work¹, but a study by Microsoft in 2019 indicated that over 160 million American households don't have broadband internet². Lack of broadband disproportionately affects low-income communities, rural populations, and tribal nations³. Because today's students who relied on their college campuses for access to Wi-Fi and have now lost access to campus and other institutions such as libraries or coffee shops where they may have had internet connection, they are now facing new and overwhelming challenges to their learning. These challenges may cause students to lag behind in their coursework, drop out for the semester, or choose to not return in future semesters.

The *Supporting Connectivity for Higher Education Students in Need Act*, which would provide college and university students with much needed internet connectivity support to continue their education during this crisis, would address these needs. Specifically, the bill establishes a fund

1

<https://www.educause.edu/research-and-publications/books/educating-net-generation/convenience-communications-and-control-how-students-use-technology>

2

<https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2019/04/08/its-time-for-a-new-approach-for-mapping-broadband-data-to-better-serve-americans/>

3

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/12/rural-and-lower-income-counties-lag-nation-internet-subscription.html>

at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to provide support for postsecondary institutions to provide internet connectivity and equipment for students with the greatest financial need.

Supporting today's college students by providing access to resources that are critical for their learning—including broadband—is paramount during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. We urge you to support today's students by including the *Supporting Connectivity for Higher Education Students in Need Act* in the next relief package and look forward to any opportunity to work together on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Higher Learning Advocates
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
ACT, Inc.
America Forward
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Asian Americans Advancing Justice
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Breakthrough Central Texas
College Forward
Cornell Student Assembly
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Council for Opportunity in Education
CUNY University Student Senate
Distance Education Accrediting Commission
ED2WORK
EDUCAUSE
Greater Memphis Chamber
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce
LeadMN
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MediaJustice
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
Nashville State Community College Foundation
National Action Network
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans
National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
National League of Cities
National Skills Coalition

National Urban League
New America's Higher Education Program
New America's Open Technology Institute
New England Commission of Higher Education
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
Northwestern Health Sciences University
OCA- Asian Pacific American Advocates
Public Knowledge
Rebuilding America's Middle Class
San Antonio Education Partnership
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
St. Louis Graduates
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Student Veterans of America
Students United
The Education Trust
The Graduate! Network, Inc.
Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf)
uAspire
UnidosUS
United Negro College Fund (UNCF)
University of California Student Association
WASC Senior College and University Commission
Young Invincibles