



August 3, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

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

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

As you continue to deliberate on the next phase of pandemic relief legislation, the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) strongly urge you to appropriate at least \$5.25 billion in emergency funding to provide home broadband connectivity and devices to the millions of students that will not be able to learn online alongside their peers when school restarts this fall. Our organizations represent the school district and state education professionals responsible for equipping students and educators with the technology, including broadband connections and cybersecurity, needed for learning in these difficult times. The pandemic has taken an unprecedented toll on our nation's education systems and exposed a chasm between learners who have access to broadband at home and those—particularly from rural and low-income households—who lack the connectivity they need for learning.

With the pandemic continuing to affect the entire country and the school year only days away, many communities plan to resume school with a mix of in-person and online learning. Online learning offers students a chance to continue their studies, but far too many homes lack access to the secure high-speed broadband connections and devices that students and educators require to make these learning environments feasible. Students that lack broadband access—disproportionately rural and low-income learners—were especially impacted by school closures earlier this year. Without additional resources in the next pandemic relief package, these students will fall further behind simply because they lack the resources they urgently need to participate in online learning.

Recent studies by Common Sense Media and the Alliance for Excellence in Education show that at least \$5.25 billion in additional emergency funding is required to connect all students and

begin to close the digital divide that has been exposed by the pandemic. This additional funding is needed to ensure that schools can quickly provide all unconnected learners with the hardware, software, and protected broadband connections needed to deliver safe and secure online learning when school resumes in just a few weeks.

This dedicated broadband funding is desperately needed by the nation's school districts and we strongly urge you to include it in the next pandemic relief legislation. State and local leaders are counting on you to quickly address this emergency connectivity need so that students, especially our most vulnerable learners, do not fall further behind academically as a result of the pandemic. Thank you for considering this urgent request.

Sincerely,

Keith Krueger
Chief Executive Officer
Consortium for School Networking

Christine Fox
Deputy Executive Director
State Educational Technology Directors Association