

Sept. 17, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair  
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker,

Without a computer or tablet, more than [11% of consumers](#) across the country can't connect to the internet -- despite Congress' significant investments in deploying affordable broadband across the nation. Computers and tablets enable people to [apply for jobs](#), fill out government forms, and [successfully](#) complete schoolwork. These tasks are difficult or impossible to do online with just a mobile device or no device. Even if a household lacks home internet, computers and tablets enable consumers to leverage private and public Wi-Fi networks across their communities. This is why Congress *must* include a program to give low-income consumers device vouchers in the budget reconciliation package.

The unfortunate reality is that most low-income consumers, including many senior citizens, students, and workers, can't afford to spend hundreds of dollars for a computer or tablet. [Thirty-one percent](#) of non-broadband users cite the cost of a computer as one of the reasons they do not have broadband at home. The numbers of those without a device are staggering:

- Across the country, more than [40% of low-income adults](#) don't own a desktop or laptop.
- More than [7.2 million](#) people aged 65+ do not have a computer at all.
- [Thirty-seven percent](#) of schoolchildren in lower-income families had to do their schoolwork on a cellphone and 25% were not able to complete their schoolwork because they lacked access to a computer at home.
- Many more households, including [32%](#) of Latinx families home-schooling during the pandemic, do not have enough computers or tablets, forcing families to make difficult decisions about who can connect and when.

To remedy this problem, **Congress must pass a device voucher program** that provides a broad array of low-income consumers with a voucher they can use to purchase a high-quality new or refurbished computer or tablet. Each household should be eligible for more than one device so that multiple members of the household can connect simultaneously. The program should also provide for robust advertising of the benefit as well as assistance to help eligible consumers enroll.

Congress can help connect millions of consumers through a device voucher program. We urge you not to miss this important opportunity to further close the digital divide by adopting it as part of the budget reconciliation package. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Access Now

Alliance for Community Media

American Association of Service Coordinators

American Council on Education

American Society on Aging

American Telemedicine Association

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC

Asociación Nacional ProPersonas Mayores

California Center for Rural Policy

Center for Accessible Technology

Center for Democracy & Technology

Center for Rural Strategies

Centro Americano

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Christensen Institute for Community Health & Empowerment

City of San Jose, Mayor's Office of Technology & Innovation

Civic Technology Ventures

Common Cause

Communities Closing the Urban Digital Divide

Comp-U-Dopt

Computer CORE

Computer Reach

Connect Your Community Institute

Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel

ConnectMaine

Consumer Reports (CR)

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Virginia

Cyberspan Digital Alliance

Dell Technologies

Delta Interfaith

Denver Public Library

Digital Bridge, Inc.

Digital Equity Institute

DigitalC

Digitunity

E-Rate & Educational Services

E-Rate Central

EDUCAUSE

Electronic Access Foundation

Electronic Frontier Foundation

EveryLibrary Institute

Explora

EYEJ: Empowering Youth, Exploring Justice  
Fight for the Future  
Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization  
Free Geek  
Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing  
Great Works Internet  
Health Forward Foundation  
Hellerstein & Associates  
Helping Link-Mot Dau Noi  
Heroes Deserve Help  
Higher Learning Advocates  
Hopscotch Creative  
HP Inc.  
HTTP  
Human-I-T  
IBSA, Inc.  
Illinois for Educational Equity  
INCOMPAS  
Information Technology Exchange  
Informative Technologies Inc.  
Institute for Local Self-Reliance  
Kansas City Public Library  
Link Oregon (Oregon Fiber Partnership)  
Literacy Solutions NY  
Literacy Source  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)  
MediaJustice  
MetroEast Community Media  
Microsoft Corporation  
Mobile Citizen, a Voqal Project  
mohuman  
Movement Alliance Project  
Multimedia Resource and Training Institute (MMRTI)  
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)  
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs  
National Collaborative for Digital Equity  
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients  
National Council on Aging  
National Digital Inclusion Alliance  
National Hispanic Media Coalition  
National League of Cities  
NC 100  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

NorthEast STEAM Coalition  
Oak Hill Collaborative  
OpenMedia.  
Palmetto Care Connections  
Partners Bridging the Digital Divide  
PCs for People Maryland  
Pennsylvania Utility Law Project  
Pottsboro Area Public Library  
Prairie STEM  
Public Knowledge  
Real Change  
Renaissance 21  
Right Here, Right Now Project  
Riverside Language Program, Inc.  
San Diego Futures Foundation  
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition  
Southern Oregon Education Service District  
St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium  
Starry, Inc.  
Tech Goes Home  
Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc (TDI)  
The Big-Brained Superheroes Club  
The Greenlining Institute  
The Islamic Center of Portland, Masjed As-Saber  
The Nonprofit Technology Enterprise Network (NTEN)  
The Oasis Institute  
The STEM Alliance  
Together for Hope  
University of New Mexico Medical Group  
Utah Education and Telehealth Network  
Villa Comunitaria  
Voqal  
Westchester Library System  
Windstream  
Wisdom of the Elders Inc.  
World Computer Exchange, Inc.