



How to Keep Our kids Connected Once the Pandemic is Over Introducing the Student Internet Equity Program

With each day that passes during the Covid-19 health crisis, achievement gaps grow wider for our nation's school students who do not have access to high-speed Internet or the devices needed for distance learning. On September 10, NCTA, US Telecom, The Rural Broadband Association, and EducationSuperHighway announced the K-12 Bridge to Broadband program.

This program is a positive step in the right direction. It lays the groundwork for a national solution by providing a framework for school districts and service providers to work together in identifying students who lack broadband service. The participating service providers and organizations should be commended for stepping up.

But it is time for the federal government to step and do its part.

Our students' ability to access to these vital tools for education and workforce success should be national policy.

We can build on this framework and ensure that we don't *patchwork a* solution for some kids in some school districts. Most importantly, we can ensure that students – low-income students of color—students who live in rural areas or on tribal lands—do not lose Internet services at home once schools are able to return to classroom learning or when the sponsored services paid for by local jurisdictions terminate—which most will at the end of the 2020-21 school year.

We can do this through the **Student Internet Equity Program**.

The Student Internet Equity Program would provide high quality low-cost subsidized Internet and computer access for low-income middle and high school students, under a shared cost formula spread between providers, families, and government. A discounted student rate would be available to all other households where a middle or high school student resides.

This can work and here's why. The cable industry and telecom providers are already demonstrating that they have the operational capacity and the will to scale discounted Internet service to low-income families nationwide.

What is needed now is a funding program that is both fair and available nationally.

Local and state municipalities including the City of Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Las Vegas, and many others are launching groundbreaking initiatives in collaboration with broadband providers. These efforts recognize the critical need to invest in our students and herald the acceptance of the essential role the Internet plays in students' academic and future workforce success.

In Chicago, the \$50 million initiative relies heavily on the generosity of individuals such as former President and First Lady Barack and Michelle Obama. We cannot and should not count on the goodwill and generosity of a few good souls. And we cannot let the Internet be disconnected and the computers returned once there is a vaccine for the coronavirus.

Let's make education equitable for the millions of middle and high school students who are depending on us to prepare them for college and careers.

Our kids need us to act now.

Follow me and sign up [here](#) to get more information how we can make Student Internet Equity a reality for our nation's students.