

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to take immediate action to ensure that all K-12 students in the U.S. have access to the internet so that they can continue learning while schools are closed in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In an effort to limit the spread of coronavirus, 40 states across the country—including ours—have closed their schools,<sup>1</sup> and additional closures are expected. Meanwhile, nearly 12 million students still do not have access to the internet at home.<sup>2</sup> As states temporarily close their schools and move to online instruction to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff, the FCC must take action to expand internet availability and keep Americans informed.

The FCC plays a critical role in making sure that all students can access online instruction at home, and that includes using its authority to ensure that students remain connected and that students and schools are informed about access to additional resources during a public health emergency.<sup>3</sup> As the FCC provides additional resources, we ask the FCC to create a consumer-friendly web portal, searchable by region, with the latest information about how consumers can get and stay connected, including contacts for telecommunications providers, links to maps of publicly available WiFi hotspots, and information about federal and corporate assistance to those without broadband internet, and to work with media outlets to distribute this information to those who are not already online. Without swift action from the FCC, students from households without access to high-speed internet face challenges in learning from home while their schools are closed.

It is for these reasons that we urge the FCC to use its existing authority and resources to ensure that all students can access online instruction at home to continue learning and keep Americans

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1 Nagel, David. (2020, March 18). *Updated List of Statewide School Closures with Closure Dates*. The Journal. Retrieved from <https://thejournal.com/articles/2020/03/17/list-of-states-shutting-down-all-their-schools-grows-to-36.aspx>

2 Gaudiano, Nicole. (2020, March 10). *Coronavirus quarantines could rob poor, rural students of access to education*. Politico. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/10/coronavirus-quarantines-rural-students-125048>.

3 Federal Communications Commission Sixth Report and Order in the E-rate proceeding. (2010, September 28).

informed during this public health crisis. We respectfully request that you provide us with information on the steps that the FCC is taking to address this critical issue.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



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Jon Tester  
United States Senator