



July 8, 2020

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Vanita Gupta

**CO-SPONSOR AND SUPPORT THE EMERGENCY BROADBAND  
CONNECTIONS ACT**

**Affordable Broadband is Essential for Public Health, Economic Security, and  
Education**

Dear Senators:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the undersigned organizations, we write to urge you to co-sponsor and support the Emergency Broadband Connections Act (EBCA), the companion measure to H.R. 6881, and the emergency broadband provisions of the HEROES Act. Even as some states re-open, nearly all people in the nation—from seniors to children—must continue to rely on broadband to work, learn, and meet daily needs as they continue to social distance. The need for connectivity across the country, including in the U.S. territories, has never been greater, exacerbating the consequences of the existing digital divide. Moreover, with many companies ending their commitment to the Federal Communications Commission's Keep Americans Connected Pledge as of June 30, 2020, fewer people will be able to afford broadband during this public health and economic crisis.

Affordable broadband is critical to:

- **Provide telehealth for everyone** – particularly seniors and veterans. Patients and people with disabilities must have a reliable broadband service at home to take advantage of remote health care and the additional authorization for telehealth in the CARES Act.
- **Ensure a more rapid end to the COVID-19 emergency.** Broadband enables all people in the United States to comply more easily with national social distancing guidelines and local orders, which will mean a faster end to the outbreak.
- **Economic security.** As we attempt to rebuild our economy, workers and small business owners need a quality broadband service to safely work from home, serve their customers remotely or apply for emergency benefits.
- **Fill the “homework gap.”** This fall, students are still likely, at best, to blend at-home and in-class learning. To be effective, high-speed broadband at home must meet the needs of a whole family and withstand intensive network use.

We strongly support the EBCA's provisions that:

- 1) Authorize \$8.8 billion in order to guarantee a \$50 emergency broadband benefit (\$75 in tribal areas) to every eligible low-income household in the country that makes a request to their Internet Service Provider (ISP) and to offer a one-time discount for ISP-provided devices.
- 2) Provide benefits to households within 135 percent of the federal poverty guideline, recently laid off, furloughed, applied for or approved for state unemployment insurance,

participate in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, National School Lunch (NSL), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA), the Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit, or receive Federal Pell Grants.

- 3) Improve the existing Federal Communications Commission's low-income Lifeline program to offer unlimited voice minutes and texting.

Even as some states re-open, the nation is seeing increased infection rates, continued need for older and immune-compromised people to remain at home, and continued widespread reliance on tele-education, tele-health and tele-work—all demonstrating the need for affordable broadband. We strongly urge Senators to ensure that the next COVID-19 legislation addresses this critical need and includes an appropriation of the full authorized amounts.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions about the issues raised in this letter, please feel free to contact Media/Telecommunications Task Force Co- Chairs Cheryl Leanza, United Church of Christ, Office of Communication, Inc., at [cleanza@alhmail.com](mailto:cleanza@alhmail.com), and Kate Ruane, American Civil Liberties Union, at [kruane@aclu.org](mailto:kruane@aclu.org), or Corrine Yu, Leadership Conference Senior Program Director, at [yu@civilrights.org](mailto:yu@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
AFL-CIO  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
Access Humboldt  
African American Ministers In Action  
AIDS Foundation Chicago  
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas  
American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Council of the Blind  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Library Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
Andrew Goodman Foundation  
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
Association of Assistive Technology Act Program  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)  
Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Center for Democracy & Technology  
Center for Responsible Lending  
Central American Resource Center

Children's Home & Aid  
Citizens Action Coalition of IN  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Common Cause  
Communications Workers of America  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office  
Disability Law Center  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality North Carolina  
Fair Count  
Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana  
Farmworker Association of Florida  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
Filipina Women's Network  
George Wiley Center  
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network  
Green for All  
Hindu American Foundation  
Hispanic Federation  
Housing Choice Partners  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Just Harvest  
Justice for Migrant Women  
Justice in Aging  
Lambda Legal  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
Matthew Shepard Foundation  
Media Alliance  
Michael Reese Research and Education Foundation  
Mississippi Center for Justice  
NAACP  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Center for Transgender Equality

National Coalition for Literacy  
National Coalition for the Homeless  
National Community Action Partnership  
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients  
National Council on Independent Living  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Health Law Program  
National Hispanic Media Coalition  
National Indian Education Association  
National League of Cities  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Urban League  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates  
Our Children Oregon  
Partnership for America's Children  
PCUN  
Pennsylvania Utility Law Project, on behalf of our low income clients  
People for the American Way  
PFLAG National  
Project Appleseed  
RCHN Community Health Foundation  
Service Employees International Union  
South Asian Network  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
Success Against All Odds  
Texas Progressive Action Network  
The Arc of the United States  
UnidosUS  
United Spinal Association  
Urbana Champaign Independent Media Center  
Workers Center of Central NY  
Workplace Fairness