



October 25, 2021

Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically underscored the urgent national imperative of closing the broadband gap to ensure every American has access to an affordable and reliable broadband connection and the digital skills needed to unlock the full potential of modern technology.

According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) — more than [14 million](#) Americans lack broadband access. However, a recent study found the actual number of people lacking access to affordable, reliable broadband in the U.S. is closer to [42 million](#), and a separate analysis of usage data suggests that as many as [120 million](#) Americans are not using the internet at broadband speeds. This digital divide threatens access to the full promise of the American Dream for too many communities — both urban and rural.

The challenge is especially acute in income insecure communities where too many cannot afford broadband service or lack access to infrastructure and devices. American communities are being left behind without access to broadband infrastructure, without the resources they need to afford broadband service, without access to broadband-supported devices for telehealth, telework and school and without the digital skills necessary to utilize the full potential of digital technology.

Connect Americans Now (CAN) is a broad-based coalition representing leading voices in agriculture, education, health care, veterans' issues, technology and small business — committed to urgent action to completely eliminate the digital divide.

CAN and the co-signed organizations below commend the progress thus far in Congress to advance the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This legislation represents an important first step in bringing affordable, reliable broadband and digital skills to every American — regardless of zip code. While much more needs to be done to permanently close the broadband gap in every community, this legislation provides an essential \$65 billion down payment toward bridging the digital divide through broadband deployment, adoption and digital skills training. We applaud the positive collaboration and bipartisan passage of this legislation in the U.S. Senate in August, and urge the U.S. House to follow suit to swiftly pass this tremendous investment to close the digital divide. We encourage lawmakers in the House to work diligently to move the legislation to the president's desk by the end of the month without further delay.

Congress must build on the positive momentum by advancing additional solutions to permanently bridge the digital divide. We were encouraged to see the House Committee on Energy and Commerce [include](#) additional funding for the Emergency Connectivity Fund as a key provision of the Build Back Better Act. We encourage lawmakers, in both chambers, to use this opportunity to do more to secure digital equity by ensuring adequate financial support is available for every American household



to afford broadband service and the devices needed to fully unlock the potential of digital technology — and to advance permanent solutions to ensure broadband service and digital skills are available in unserved and underserved communities.

Now more than ever, creating good jobs, lifting wages, reducing poverty, improving health outcomes and strengthening education depends on affordable, reliable broadband connectivity and access to digital devices and skills in every American community.

Americans stuck on the wrong side of the digital divide are counting on continued, swift and decisive action. We're encouraged by the positive progress made to date and hope to see Congress capitalize on this unique opportunity to permanently bridge the digital divide and ensure every American has access to an affordable, reliable broadband connection and the devices and skills needed to participate in the 21st century digital economy.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

ACT | The App Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Telemedicine Association
BASF
BroadbandNow
College Possible
Connect Americans Now
Connected Nation
Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
Corteva
Council for Affordable and Rural Housing
INCOMPAS
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Grange
National Rural Education Association
National Veteran Small Business Coalition
OCHIN
Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC)
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition
Student Veterans of America
U.S. Canola Association

Regional, State and Local Organizations

Blue Mountain Networks
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Telehealth Network
Chehalem Valley Innovation Accelerator
Economic Development Partnership of Montgomery County
Ethoplex
Greater Grenada Partnership
Mississippi Restaurant and Hospitality Association
Montana Rural Education Association
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
Northwoods Association of REALTORS
Oregon Association of Nurseries
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Oregon State Chamber of Commerce
Oregon Hop Commission
Oregon State Grange
Oregon Water Resources Congress
Thomas County Economic Development Alliance
Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association
Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance

cc:

Honorable Frank Pallone, Chair, U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation