



Duckworth, Durbin Join Markey and Colleagues to Introduce Legislation to Ensure All Students Have Access to Internet during Coronavirus Pandemic

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– Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY), Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA), and Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Brian Schatz (D-HI) and 37 colleagues to introduce the *Emergency Educational Connections Act*, legislation aimed at ensuring all K-12 students have adequate home internet connectivity and devices during the coronavirus pandemic. The bill is the Senate companion to legislation recently [introduced](#) by Congresswoman Grace Meng (NY-06), but makes one important change: increasing the appropriation from \$2 billion to \$4 billion. Education groups had originally identified the \$2 billion figure believing the crisis would last only through this academic year. As more educators have come to realize the crisis could last far longer, need has only increased.

“As a parent currently homeschooling my five-year-old with the help of online learning, I understand how critical it is to have a strong and reliable internet connection,” said Duckworth. “No student—no matter where they live or their socioeconomic situation—should fall behind in the classroom because they can’t get high-speed internet. I’m proud to join my colleagues on this important legislation to close the ‘homework gap’ and support education for kids everywhere during these challenging times.”

“As kitchen tables become classrooms, we must minimize the disruptions students are facing as they finish the school year online. That begins by addressing the digital divide and ensuring that every student, regardless of income-level or zip code, has proper access to reliable internet and devices to help them stay connected to their educational goals,” said Durbin. “The *Emergency Educational Connections Act* is a step forward in

closing that digital divide and providing students with the resources to succeed academically.”

“We cannot allow the ‘homework gap’ to become a larger ‘learning gap’ during the coronavirus pandemic.” said Senator Markey. “Without immediate action by Congress, and \$4 billion in E-Rate funding, the students of low-income families, immigrants, communities of color and rural areas are at risk of being left behind. I am proud to lead xx of my colleagues to introduce *Emergency Educational Connections Act*, which will make sure all students in America have the connectivity they need. I will fight to make sure this essential legislation is included in any future coronavirus relief package.”

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a bright light on the “homework gap” experienced by the 12 million students in this country who do not have internet access at home and are unable to complete their homework. Research has shown that the homework gap affects students in both rural and urban areas and disproportionately affects lower-income students and students of color. Students without internet access at home consistently score lower in reading, math, and science. This existing inequity is being exacerbated during the current public health emergency as schools suspend in-person classes and transition to remote learning over the internet to protect the health of students, faculty and staff.

A copy of the legislation can be found [HERE](#).

Co-sponsors of the legislation include: Cory Booker (D-NJ), Doug Jones (D-AL), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Angus King (I-ME), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Jack Reed (D-RI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tina Smith (D-MN), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Tom Udall (D-NM), Gary Peters (D-MI), Patty Murray (D-WA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Bob Casey, Jr. (D-PA), Tom Carper (D-DE), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Chris Coons (D-DE), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Mark Warner (D-VA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and John Tester (D-MT).

Specifically, the *Emergency Educational Connections Act* would:

- Provide \$4 billion in federal support for elementary and secondary schools and libraries, including tribal schools and libraries, to provide Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers, and internet-enabled devices (as well as internet service through such equipment) to students, staff, and patrons;

- Allow schools and libraries to continue to use the equipment after the emergency period; and
- Ensure schools and libraries prioritize support for those most in need, following the guidelines of the E-Rate program.

The *Emergency Educational Connections Act* is supported by the following organizations: AASA The School Superintendents Association, Advance CTE, Alliance for Excellent Education, American Federation of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, AFLCIO, American Library Association, American Psychological Association, American School Counselor Association, ASCD, Association for Career and Technical Education, Association of Educational Service Agencies, Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), Children's Health Fund, Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Committee for Children, Common Sense Media, CoSN - Consortium for School Networking, Council for Exceptional Children, Council of Administrators of Special Education, Family Centered Treatment Foundation, First Focus Campaign for Children, Girls Inc., IDEA Public Schools, International Society for Technology in Education, KIPP Foundation, Learning Forward, Magnet Schools of America, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, National Association for Music Education, National Association of Counties (NACo), National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS), National Association of Independent Schools, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), National Catholic Educational Association, National Center for Families Learning, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), National Education Association, National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium, National Rural Education Association, National School Boards Association (NSBA), Parents as Teachers, Public Knowledge, Project Tomorrow, Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK), SETDA (State Educational Technology Directors Association), Schools Healthy & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB), Stand for Children, Teach For America, and The Education Trust.