



Raoul Urges Congress To Fund Broadband: Access Critical for Those Studying, Working, Seeking Healthcare During Pandemic

May 21 2020 4:00 PM



CHICAGO – Kwame Raoul today joined 38 attorneys general in urging Congress to take action to ensure that all Americans have the home internet connectivity necessary to participate in telemedicine, teleschooling and telework as part of any additional legislation that provides relief and recovery resources related to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

“High-speed internet access has played a critical role in giving Illinois residents the ability to work, learn, socialize and seek healthcare remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Raoul said. “Congress and federal officials should work to ensure that all Americans have access to this vital resource.”

While Raoul and the attorneys general have lauded the independent efforts of various companies to increase internet access by waiving late fees or even providing free or

discounted access to students and medical providers, such efforts often do not include lower income customers, such as people with pre-paid service. Further, current efforts may not represent a long-term solution to ensuring access to high-speed internet. Ultimately, Raoul and the attorneys general argue, there needs to be a national solution.

Unless Congress acts quickly, disparities in access to home internet connectivity will exacerbate existing gaps in educational and health outcomes along lines of geography, economic resources, and race.

In a letter sent to Congressional leaders, Raoul and the attorneys general urge Congress to:

Provide state, territorial and local governments with adequate funding expressly dedicated to ensuring that all students and patients, especially senior citizens who have higher health risks, have adequate internet-enabled technology to participate equally in online learning and telemedicine.

Increase funding to the U.S. Federal Communication Commission Universal Service Fund, which provides vital funding to rural and low-income populations, healthcare providers and educators with the goal of bridging the digital divide.

With public health experts warning that a second wave of coronavirus infections may require teleschooling and telemedicine to continue for millions of Americans for the rest of 2020, Raoul and the coalition argue it is critical that Congress act now to help ensure that all Americans have the home internet connectivity they need to access educational opportunities, healthcare, and to earn a livelihood.

Joining Raoul in sending the letter are the attorneys general of Alaska, American Samoa, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.