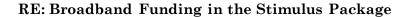
February 10, 2021

The Hon. Frank Pallone Chair House Energy and Commerce Committee 1309 Longworth HOB Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Cathy McMorris Rodgers Ranking Member House Energy and Commerce Committee 2141 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515



Dear Chair Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

The American Civil Liberties Union, on behalf of its more than eight million members, supporters, and activists, writes to thank you for planning to include over 7 billion dollars in funding for an emergency connectivity fund that will help elementary and secondary students afford internet access service and connected devices in the next pandemic relief package. This funding is a meaningful and substantial step towards addressing the yawning gap between children who have internet access at home and computers to connect, and those who do not. This gap is more pronounced for Black, Hispanic, and lower income households and we are pleased that Congress plans to provide funds that will help these children attend school, connect with their teachers and classmates, and complete their schoolwork.¹

But Congress must do more to close the digital divide for all people. We are very grateful that Congress took the incredible and historic step of creating the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program in December of 2020. That program will help all low-income families, including those with children, obtain the connectivity they need to be able to sign up for vaccine appointments, search for work, work from home, attend school, and so many other necessary activities of life. Unfortunately, given the size of the need for this benefit, the funding set aside for the EBB could run out in three to six months. For that reason, in

¹ Brooke Auxier and Monica Anderson, *As schools close due to the coronavirus, some U.S. students face a digital homework gap'*, FACTTANK PEW RESEARCH CNTR. (Mar. 16, 2020), https://www.pewresearch.org/facttank/2020/03/16/as-schools-close-due-to-the-coronavirus-some-u-s-students-face-a-digital-homework-gap/.



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Ronald Newman National Political Director addition to continuing to fund the proposed Emergency Connectivity Fund, and at the earliest possible opportunity, Congress also should allocate additional funds to the EBB sufficient to last until a bridge can be built to keep all families connected even after the program ends.

Thank you again for creating the EBB and for including this additional funding that will help elementary and secondary students to access broadband and connected devices. We look forward to working with Congress to close the digital divide once and for all. Please reach out to Kate Ruane, kruane@aclu.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ronald Newman

National Political Director

Kate Ruane

Senior Legislative Counsel

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi Majority Leader Steny Hoyer Majority Whip Jim Clyburn