



Chairman Michael F. Doyle
Subcommittee Communications & Technology
House Committee on Energy & Commerce

Re: Hearing on Broadband Equity: Addressing Disparities in Access and Affordability

Dear Chairman Doyle and Committee Members,

I am writing to give you information about a cost-efficient sustainable policy proposal to **eliminate the homework gap for the 29 million US secondary school students in this country**. The **Student Internet Equity Program (SIEP)** leverages bulk purchasing to efficiently utilize existing marketplace discounts for low-income families, and eligibility, verification and reimbursements occur through the Universal Service Administrative Company. ***See attached policy document.***

Costs for the program are shared by government, families and internet service providers. Because of this market-based approach, **all 29.9 million middle and high school students** could gain access, and stay connected, to affordable internet and a computer at home at a cost to government of between \$1.5-\$3.9B a year, averaged over 5 years.

This can work and here's why. The cable industry and telecom providers have demonstrated they have the operational capacity and the will to scale discounted Internet service to low-income families nationwide. Comcast has demonstrated this capability since it began Internet Essentials in 2011. What is needed now is a funding program that is fair, available nationally, and easy to administer. This is the Student Internet Equity Program.

We cannot waste this moment of national clarity around the digital divide for students. Our middle and high school students must have internet and computer access at home to compete academically and to develop the digital skills they need for the workforce of today and tomorrow. A recent Michigan state studyⁱ gave us empirical evidence that the difference in digital skills for a student that had the internet and a computer at home and one who did not—was the difference between an 8th and 11th grader. **We cannot waste this moment.**



Letter to Chairman Michael F. Doyle
The Student Internet Equity Coalition
Page Two

The Student Internet Equity Coalition is led by Donna Rattley Washington, a former cable and telecommunications law partner, cable system General Manager for Washington, DC and Regional Vice President for Comcast.

Sincerely,

/S/

Donna Rattley Washington
Founder

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ⁱ Hampton, K.N. Fernandez, L. Robertson, C.T. & Bauer, J.M. *Broadband and Student Performance Gaps*, James H. and Mary B. Quello Center, Michigan State University, <https://doi.org/10.25335/BZGY-3V91>