



Student Internet Equity Coalition Policy Proposal to Connect 29 Million Middle and High School Students to Internet and Computer Access at Home

Nearly **1 in 5 teens** and **1 in 4 Black teens** in the US do not have access to the internet or a connected device at home. This is a national issue across all 50 states. Even in states with the smallest divide, **1 in 4** students lacks access. For states with the largest divide, **almost half** of students lack adequate internet access at home.

Low-income students are disproportionately impacted. 35% of families with K-12 students earning under \$30,000 lack access; 41% of Black families; 36.2% of rural families; and 34.2% Native American families. For K-12 families earning under \$25,000, the outlook is even bleaker—45% lack internet access at home.

We will not fix this problem for students without an affordability solution coupled with a comprehensive digital adoption program.

The Student Internet Equity Program (SIEP)

Key Facts:

- **Targeted to Eliminate the Homework Gap.** SIEP is a new standalone program focused exclusively on fixing the "homework gap" and the need for critical digital skill development for secondary school students;
- **Sustainable Market-oriented Solution.** Bulk-purchases existing marketplace discounts for low-income families.
- **Most Effective and Comprehensive Distribution Channel.** Families connect to SIEP at their local school—the most comprehensive and trusted resource for families with children.
- **Public-Private Shared Costs.** Government, families, and broadband providers share the costs. The total cost to the government for SIEP is between \$1.5-\$3.9 Billion¹, averaged over five years.
- **High-Quality Broadband and Affordable Cost.** SIEP offers a family with a middle or high school student a set tier of broadband service with sufficient speeds at an affordable rate.
- **Ready.** SIEP utilizes the newly strengthened USAC national eligibility, verification, and reimbursement system.

SIEP Program Description:

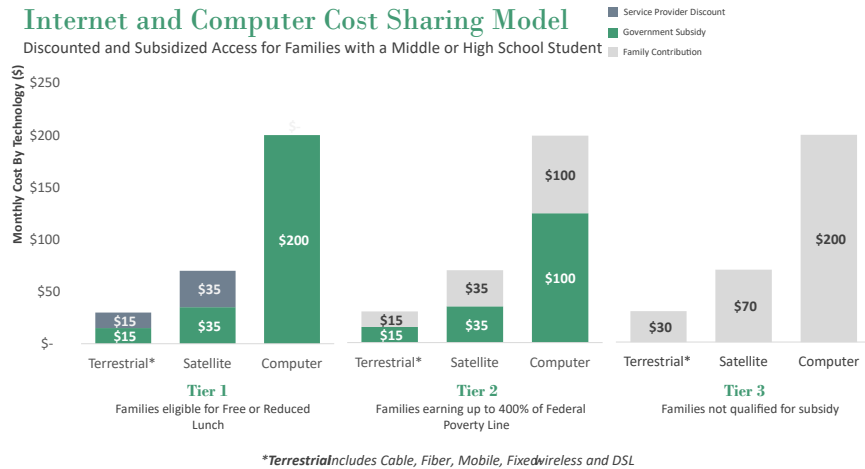
- SIEP has three simple eligibility tiers for middle and high school families based on family income. Tier 1 includes families that qualify for free or reduced lunch, Tier 2 includes families earning up to 400%² of the Federal Poverty Line². Tier 3 includes families with a middle or high school student who does not qualify for a government subsidy. **See tiers and pricing model below.**
- SIEP takes advantage of the cable and telecom companies' marketplace discounts available to families that qualify for free or reduced lunch. Using this discounted rate, the federal government will pay the cost in total for families in Tier 1. For families in Tier 2, the federal government will subsidize half of the service

¹ Range is based on whether there are 1 or 2 eligible students per home. US average is 1.96 children per home.

²400% of Federal Poverty is the same cap under the Affordable Care Act for government assistance.

cost, and the family will pay the remainder. Families in Tier 3 do not qualify for a subsidy but can take advantage of a "Student Rate" for middle and high school students.

- Connected devices are subsidized or discounted, consistent with the level of subsidy or discount for which the family qualifies for internet service.
- SIEP is technology-neutral, and families choose the connectivity solution that works best for their family and is available where they reside.



Congress has enacted two necessary temporary broadband assistance programs designed to provide quick help to Americans during the pandemic (**Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP)** and the **Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF)**).

The Student Internet Equity Program (SIEP) is a permanent, targeted, market-oriented solution. It incorporates the **best aspects of the EBBP and ECF** and will be our most effective tool to eliminate the homework/learning gap for America's 29 million middle or high school students.

Student Internet Equity Program (SIEP) "Best of Both"

