



## **Request:**

The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress should reappropriate funding toward the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). As we navigate the challenges of the digital age, access to affordable and reliable internet connectivity has become a fundamental necessity for education, employment, healthcare, and civic participation. Without additional funding, the allotted \$14.2 billion to fund the ACP is projected to run out in April 2024.

## **Background:**

The Affordable Connectivity Program, established to address the digital divide, has played a pivotal role in bridging the internet affordability gap for underserved communities. However, as we continue to witness the transformative impact of digital inclusion efforts on every front, it is evident that additional funding is urgently required to meet the escalating demand for affordable connectivity.

More than 22 million households are receiving affordable broadband service from approximately 1,700 participating providers. In San Antonio/Bexar County, TX there are 153,000 households who rely on ACP to stay connected. Without reliable, broadband internet, we will see progress in bridging the digital divide stall and have a ripple effect on the economic mobility of households across the country.

Access to reliable, affordable internet means our communities benefit in a vast number of ways:

### **1. Workforce Development:**

- In an increasingly digital economy, access to the internet is synonymous with access to job opportunities. The ACP, with increased funding, can significantly contribute to workforce development by ensuring that all individuals have the tools and connectivity needed for online job searches, professional development, and remote work.

### **2. Telehealth Services:**

- The expansion of telehealth services has become vital for providing healthcare to underserved populations. Increased funding for the ACP will contribute to ensuring that individuals, especially those in rural areas, have access to essential healthcare services through digital means.

### **3. Small Business and Economic Growth:**

- Many small businesses depend on online platforms for marketing, sales, and customer engagement. Affordable connectivity will empower local businesses, contributing to economic growth and resilience.

### **4. Civic Engagement:**

- The ability to access government services, participate in virtual town hall meetings, and engage in civic activities relies heavily on internet connectivity. A well-funded ACP is essential for fostering an informed and engaged citizenry.

### **5. Education Equity:**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical role of internet access in education. Without reliable connectivity, students face challenges in accessing online learning resources, participating in virtual classes, and completing assignments.

## **Conclusion:**

Access to affordable and reliable internet connectivity is no longer a luxury but a necessity for full participation in today's society. Your support in advocating for the re-appropriation of funds for the Affordable Connectivity Program will undoubtedly contribute to a more connected, informed, and empowered citizenry.

## AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

We are grateful for your attention to this matter and look forward to continued collaboration to ensure that every citizen in San Antonio/Bexar County and across the nation has the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.