

August 5, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

**Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy,
and Minority Leader Schumer,**

On behalf of the Hispanic Technology and Telecommunications Partnership (HTTP), representing the most influential national Hispanic organizations engaged in policy solutions for the U.S Hispanic community, we urge Congress to include a temporary, \$50-a-month benefit for residential broadband service as a part of your economic recovery strategy in forthcoming COVID-19 stimulus package(s). Access to at home broadband is an essential resource that helps to mitigate the countering harms experienced by Latino families as well as other chronically under-resourced communities of color in the areas of health, education and to their current and future economic well being.

As structural inequalities in working and living conditions paired with underlying health disparities continue to drive higher infection/death rates for people of color nationwide, broadband access has revealed itself to be an important social determinant of health proven to reduce the risk of unnecessary exposure and infection by helping to correct the unequal effects of the U.S. economic shutdown [1].

To date, U.S. Latinos continue to be among the hardest hit by pay cuts and job losses due to the coronavirus. As Americans filed a record 6.6 million unemployment claims and unemployment rates soared to an 80 year high of 14.7% in April [2], Latinos are experiencing a record jobless rate of 18.9%, higher than any other ethnic group.[3] The economic effects of Covid-19 have lead to alarming rates of Latino financial hardship and increased food insecurity or the inability to fully pay their mortgage, rent, or other essential household services. Black and Latino adults also report having to delay major purchases, cut back spending on food, and increase credit card debt to prevent defaulting on other important financial obligations [4].

Although some states are beginning to reopen their economies, projections suggest families may be out of work or on furlough through the end of the year and into 2021 [5]. Even as unemployment insurance has been expanded, many Latino households still struggle to access critical benefits citing the lack of affordable at home broadband or because of disparate digital literacy skills needed to access safetynet programs currently operating almost entirely online.[6]

Today Congress has the opportunity to take an important stride towards bridging the digital divide through the establishment of a temporary emergency broadband benefit. This one time measure will fill a critical need during this extraordinary time and work in concert with existing programs like Lifeline and E-rate currently administered by the FCC as well as complimenting the voluntary efforts of private sector broadband providers. Together, this collaborative approach ensures that Latino families have the means to stay connected to critical resources, provides them with the possibility to upgrade their skills, helps students stay on track by engaging in distance learning, all while laying a solid foundation for a strong U.S. economic recovery.

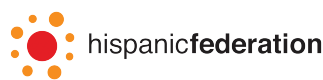
As Congress considers how to best optimize the impact of taxpayer dollars we encourage prioritizing support for home broadband service as well as other longer term strategies like increased funding for adoption, network sustainability, and infrastructure deployment to areas still lacking access in upcoming stimulus packages to curb the spread of the virus and protect the health and economic well-being of the Latino community during this unprecedented moment of economic uncertainty.

Sincerely,



Alejandro Roark
Executive Director
Hispanic Technology & Telecommunications Partnership (HTTP)

Encl: EBB factsheet



- [1] <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26982>
- [2] <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/03/u-s-latinos-among-hardest-hit-by-pay-cuts-job-losses-due-to-coronavirus/>
- [3] <https://fortune.com/2020/05/08/record-u-s-unemployment-rate-worst-since-1940/>
- [4] <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>
- [5] <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-forecast/economists-see-uneven-jobs-recovery-high-u-s-unemployment-through-2021-idUSKCN21S0BL>
- [6] <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-covid-19-affecting-black-and-latino-families-employment-and-financial-well-bei>