

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to take action to ensure that all K-12 students in Minnesota have access to high-speed internet so they can continue their education while schools are closed in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In an effort to limit the spread of the coronavirus, Minnesota has closed its schools for at least eight days, affecting nearly 900,000 students in public and charter schools.<sup>1</sup> With nearly one million students potentially being moved to online instruction, we are concerned about the 17 percent of students in Minnesota who do not have access to high-speed internet at home.<sup>2</sup> While it is critical for schools to close to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff, we urge the FCC to ensure that all students in our state who currently do not have access to the internet at home are connected.

The FCC plays an integral role in ensuring that all students can access online instruction at home, and that includes keeping schools connected during a crisis. In our state, we hear stories far too often of students in rural areas who do not have access to the internet. One student from Fort Ripley actually wrote to his cell phone company about how he had to hold his phone up to a window at his home in order to try downloading the information he needed to do his homework. Without immediate action from the FCC, these students will be unable to learn from home while their schools are closed and could be at risk of falling behind their peers.

Accordingly, we urge the FCC to take action to ensure that all Minnesota students can connect to the internet from home and continue their education during this public health crisis. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important request.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Governor Tim Walz closing K-12 schools as COVID-19 spreads. (2020, March 16) Star Tribune. Retrieved from <http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-schools-will-close-for-eight-days-due-to-coronavirus-pandemic/568812082/>.

<sup>2</sup> Estimate of Wireline Broadband Service Availability in the State of Minnesota by Speed Combinations. (2019, Apr.) Retrieved from [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/household-bb-various-speeds\\_tcm1045-297687.pdf](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/household-bb-various-speeds_tcm1045-297687.pdf); 'Homework Gap' shows millions of students lack home internet. (2019, June 10) Newsday. Retrieved from <https://www.newsday.com/business/technology/internet-schools-homework-computer-1.32096937>.