

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

March 24, 2021

Michael Powell
President and CEO
The Internet & Television Association
25 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Suite 100
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Powell:

In December 2020, Congress enacted the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB Program) in a bipartisan manner as a temporary program to provide needed relief for Americans struggling to afford the cost of high-speed Internet access.¹ As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) implements this program, it is critical that eligible consumers know about the benefit, which providers are participating in the program, and how they can access the emergency benefit. To further the effectiveness of this program, we urge your member companies to raise awareness about the availability of the EBB Program, consistent with applicable law and regulations.

We appreciate the efforts your member companies have taken to address consumer connectivity since the start of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. As the effects of the pandemic continue to be felt throughout our country, Americans need help. In addition to the very serious health crisis, the economic repercussions of the pandemic continue to weigh heavily on families across the country. Jobless claims have soared to record numbers² and the number of families struggling to afford the cost of food, rent, and utilities has skyrocketed.³

¹ Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, Pub. L. No. 112-260, Division N, Title IX, Section 904.

² *Jobless Claims Remain Elevated Last Week*, Wall Street Journal (Jan. 21, 2021).

³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Tracking the COVID-19 Recession's Effect on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships* (Mar. 22, 2021) (www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and).

The pandemic has also made access to reliable, high-speed internet more important than ever.⁴ Unfortunately, for many people, the cost of home internet service either prevents them from subscribing or forces them to make painful sacrifices in their home budget to pay the cost of service, which is exacerbated by the economic toll of the pandemic.⁵

Once operationalized, this groundbreaking program will provide economically vulnerable families a discount of \$50, or \$75 on tribal lands, off the monthly cost of home internet service, and a subsidy for certain connected devices.⁶ Internet service providers who extend these benefits to eligible households can apply to the FCC for reimbursement.⁷

For this historic \$3.2 billion program to help the greatest number of people, it will require the cooperation and support of internet service providers like your member companies. Simply put, the more companies participate in the program, the more we can, together, ensure that all Americans have this crucial connectivity. As you know, at the end of February, the FCC released its unanimously approved rules for the EBB Program and indicated that it will open within 60 days.⁸ While the FCC is working to establish the start date of the program, your member companies can play an important role in its success by proactively raising awareness of the program to their customers and the public, including households likely to be eligible for the EBB Program.

⁴ Government Technology, *States Prioritized Broadband as COVID-19 Took Hold* (Dec. 2020) (www.govtech.com/network/States-Prioritized-Broadband-as-COVID-19-Took-Hold.html).

⁵ Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, *The Digital Divide and the Pandemic: Working From Home and Internet Access* (June 29, 2020) (www.frbatlanta.org/cweo/workforce-currents/2020/06/29/the-digital-divide-and-the-pandemic-working-from-home-and-broadband-and-internet-access).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Federal Communications Commission, *FCC Adopts Report and Order to Implement Emergency Broadband Benefit Program*, (Feb. 25, 2021) (press release).

Mr. Michael Powell

March 24, 2021


Page 3

It will take all of us working together to help the country recover from this extraordinary crisis. We look forward to counting you as a partner in this important effort. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Jennifer Epperson with the Majority Committee staff at (202) 225-2927 or Evan Viau with the Minority Committee staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member



Mike Doyle
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications
and Technology



Robert E. Latta
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications
and Technology