

September 22, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chairman, House Energy and Commerce  
Committee

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member, House Energy and  
Commerce Committee

The Honorable David McKinley  
U.S. House of Representatives Washington,  
DC 20515

The Honorable Peter Welch  
U.S. House of Representatives Washington,  
DC 20515

**RE: Support for the Digital Learning Equity Act of 2015**

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Upton, Representative McKinley and Representative Welch:

The undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for the Digital Learning Equity Act of 2015. This important piece of legislation will help close the increasingly widening equity and learning gaps that exist between the students who have access to the Internet at home and those who do not.

The Digital Learning Equity Act of 2015 will help provide students and their families with equitable access to the Internet at home to support family engagement in their child's education and will allow students to accomplish essential tasks such as completing their homework, applying for colleges and seeking post-graduation employment. Specifically the bill:

- Recognizes that at-home Internet access is a critical component of high-quality learning;
- Provides support for an innovative solutions grant program;
- Prioritizes rural and high-density, low-income schools that often have the least amount of Internet access across the country;
- Recognizes the important role libraries play in facilitating access to Internet and on-line tools during after-school hours and from home; and
- Requires the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to conduct a much-needed study into the breadth of the homework gap, as national and statewide statistics are virtually non-existent but extremely crucial to providing the landscape picture necessary to solve the national problem.

Our organizations are pleased that the bill places a strong emphasis on providing districts, schools, and libraries with the resources to ensure at-home access to the Internet through innovative and meaningful solutions. According to a recent study by the PEW Research Center, 70 percent of teachers assign homework that requires access at home to broadband Internet, yet one-third of households do not subscribe to broadband services—making it impossible for students in these homes to complete homework. The study also found that students in low-income families are four times more likely to lack at-home Internet than families making above

\$50,000 per year. Black and Hispanic students make up a disproportionate percentage of the 5 million students lacking access at home. The homework gap further exacerbates to the widening educational opportunity gap facing our nation. We believe that providing some federal resources, through legislation, to help provide at-home access is an important step in closing this gap.

Additionally, our groups believe it is critical that the FCC conduct a nationwide survey to ensure resources are distributed to those who need it the most. Access to homework gap data will also help disseminate information and best practices from those districts and schools providing at-home Internet through innovative solutions.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, we strongly support the Digital Learning Equity Act of 2015 and look forward to working closely with your offices to ensure its passage.

For more information, please contact Ally Bernstein, representing the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), at [ally@jbernsteinstrategy.com](mailto:ally@jbernsteinstrategy.com).

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA)  
American Library Association (ALA)  
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)  
Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)  
International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)  
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)  
National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)  
National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA)  
National Education Association (NEA)  
National PTA  
National Rural Education Association (NREA)  
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition (NREAC)  
National School Boards Association (NSBA)  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)