

# FCC Launches Country's Largest Effort To Close Homework Gap

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WASHINGTON —Today, FCC Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel announced schools and libraries can now begin to file applications for the \$7.17 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund, the agency's latest effort to connect Americans. Schools and libraries can apply for financial support to purchase laptops and tablets, Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers, and broadband connections to serve unmet needs for off-campus use by students, school staff, and library patrons. From June 29 to August 13, eligible schools and libraries can submit requests for funding to purchase eligible equipment and services for the 2021-22 school year.

“Even before the coronavirus pandemic upended so much of day-to-day life, seven in ten teachers were assigning homework that required access to the internet. But data from this agency demonstrates that one in three households do not subscribe to broadband.

Where those numbers overlap is the Homework Gap,” said Rosenworcel. “Of all the memories and images of the past months, the one that keeps coming back to me is a viral picture of two young girls sitting outside a Taco Bell.”

“They were sitting cross-legged on the ground with laptops on their knees, using the free Wi-Fi from the restaurant to do their schoolwork. It was heart-wrenching to see. But they were not alone. Kids elsewhere during this pandemic sat in cars outside of libraries to catch a signal to go online for class. Others cobbled together the connectivity they needed by doing everything from borrowing mobile phones to lingering outside of shuttered school and municipal buildings. We should salute the grit of each and every one of these young people who found ways to go online and keep up with school. But it shouldn’t be this hard—and going forward, thanks to the Emergency Connectivity Fund, it won’t,” said Rosenworcel.

The American Rescue Plan of 2021 established the Emergency Connectivity Fund. In May, the FCC adopted the Report and Order outlining how the program would be administered. The Universal Service Administrative Company will serve as the program’s administrator with FCC oversight. The Fund leverages the processes and structures used in the E-Rate program for the benefit of schools and libraries already familiar with the E-Rate program. You can find more information about the program at [www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org](http://www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org) or [www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund](http://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund) and instructions on how to apply at [www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org/application-process](http://www.emergencyconnectivityfund.org/application-process).

Recent estimates suggest there may be as many as 16.9 million children struggling without the broadband access they need for remote learning. Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel is a long-time advocate for closing the Homework Gap, with many crediting her with the creation of the term.