

FCC Must Act Quickly As COVID-19 Threatens Healthcare, Education

March 17, 2020

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Alicja Johnson
Communications Manager
ajohnson@shlb.org
(202) 263-4626

Washington, D.C. (March 17, 2020) - Today the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition [asked the Federal Communications Commission](#) to expedite affordable broadband solutions for unconnected Americans. The novel coronavirus is driving schools to online learning and increasing healthcare providers' reliance on telehealth solutions. The SHLB Coalition letter proposes several practical, immediate actions the FCC could take to swiftly connect those without home internet access.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, and schools and libraries close across the country, the need to ensure everyone has affordable broadband at home becomes an urgent national priority. Unfortunately, approximately one-quarter of people, including 7 million students, do not have access to broadband service at home," said John Windhausen Jr., executive director of the SHLB Coalition. "The FCC can and should take immediate action to leverage the broadband capabilities of our nation's community anchor institutions to make affordable broadband available to everyone."

"The FCC can take several steps now to promote hotspot lending programs and allow schools, libraries and telehealth providers to increase their broadband capacity and share that capacity with the surrounding community," Windhausen continued. "We cannot leave people on the wrong side of an education gap and a healthcare gap, especially with the Centers for Disease Control recommending school closures for at least 8 weeks. The SHLB Coalition urges the FCC to harness the power of community anchor institutions to protect our nation's access to healthcare and education during this difficult time."

SHLB urges the FCC to take the following actions in the next week:

- Authorize emergency funding from the Universal Service Fund for hot-spot lending programs through schools, libraries, and community organizations.
- Encourage internet service providers (ISPs) to expand their low-cost broadband service offers.
- Provide a subsidy to ISPs offering free or low-cost broadband to students at home in areas that schools have closed.
- Allow schools and libraries to extend their networks to the home, without losing E-rate money.
- Adopt a final Order expanding funding for the Connected Care pilot program.
- Extend the deadline to file RHC applications to June 30.
- Approve technical rules to promote TV White Space broadband use and availability.
- Allow rural schools and educational nonprofits to claim Educational Broadband Service licenses.
- Authorize funding for wireless internet service providers to deploy broadband in unserved areas where schools are closed.

###

About SHLB:

The SHLB Coalition is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) advocacy organization that supports open, affordable, high-quality broadband connections for anchor institutions and their surrounding communities. The SHLB Coalition is based in Washington, D.C. and has a diverse membership of commercial and non-commercial organizations from across the United States. To learn more, visit www.shlb.org.

[back to shlb news](#)