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September 9, 2021

Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we urge you to include the SUCCESS Act (H.R. 4663) in the committee's portion of the budget reconciliation package (S. Con. Res. 14) to help close the digital divide and prevent a resurgence of the homework gap when funding for the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) expires on June 30, 2022. Votes on this issue may be included in NEA's Report Card for the 117th Congress.

Congress wisely created the ECF as part of the American Rescue Plan, providing \$7.17 billion to furnish home broadband service and educationally appropriate devices to K-12 students, educators, and library patrons in every state in the nation. It has been an unqualified success in bridging the homework gap—the inability to do schoolwork at home due to lack of internet access. Schools and libraries have already applied for \$5.1 billion of the available \$7.17 billion in ECF funds—more than 70 percent of the dollars Congress approved—to provide 5.4 million broadband connections and 9.1 million devices. The remaining \$2 billion in ECF funding will soon be exhausted.

Before the pandemic, lack of home connectivity made it difficult—often impossible—for students to complete online homework assignments, conduct internet research, apply for college or jobs, and take advantage of critical government services. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived and K-12 education moved online, millions of students were unable to attend class at all. Nationwide, 16 million students were affected—nearly 1 in 3—a disproportionate share of whom were African American or Hispanic, from low-income households, or living in rural areas.

The SUCCESS Act would provide additional funding for the ECF to ensure we do not lose the ground gained in closing the homework gap. To prevent millions of students, teachers, and library patrons from seeing their computer screens go dark next year, we urge you to include the SUCCESS Act in the budget reconciliation package.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association