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August 3, 2023

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2433 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Letter in support of the Affordable Connectivity Program

Dear Representatives Jeffries, McCarthy and Senators McConnell  
and Schumer,

We write to you as a coalition of organizations whose collective mission is to advocate for equitable access to essential resources and services, including broadband connectivity, for African Americans. Today, we highlight the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) as a vital lifeline for marginalized communities and express our support for its extension and continued funding.

In creating this program, Congress recognized that access to affordable broadband has become a necessity in the 21st century. Affordable connectivity enables individuals to compete for better-paying jobs, take advantage of remote work opportunities, access online educational resources, utilize Tele-health services, and develop valuable digital skills. It fosters social mobility and economic empowerment, ultimately narrowing the digital divide that disproportionately affects the people in our communities.

Despite the importance of the internet to modern interactions, many individuals, particularly those in underserved communities, continue to face financial barriers that prevent them from accessing this essential resource.<sup>1</sup> According to NTIA, offline households who cited either a lack of interest or expense as the main reasons for non-use were more likely than their online peers to make less than \$25,000 per year. Furthermore, these same individuals were more likely to be people of color, and to have lower educational attainment.

ACP has made a meaningful impact in addressing these needs connecting more than 19 million households that are primarily low-income households across the United States to high-speed internet. The ACP has created opportunities for school, work and life. Significantly, research indicates that 25% of these households are first-time internet users.

The program not only has the direct benefit of helping so many in need have the resources to get online, but it also has indirectly served as a bridge to financial stability. Consumers would rather reduce their expenditures on electricity, heating or car payments than home internet or mobile service. ACP helps households manage the difficult choices of maintaining a consistent internet connection with limited resources by providing a direct and significant subsidy for Broadband services.

Despite the overwhelming success story for the ACP, it is in danger of ending way too soon. ACP is expected to exhaust its existing funding stream in early 2024, *so we write today to urge you to work with your colleagues in Congress to provide necessary funds this year* to avoid any lapse in benefits and eliminate uncertainty for our constituencies in whether this program will be continued. This issue is not a partisan one; it is a matter of equity, opportunity, and the future of our nation. Failure to act would be a disservice to the millions of individuals, including [number of households of color], who rely on this program to access the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your leadership and support in securing a more equitable and connected future for all.

Sincerely,  
A Philip Randolph Educational Fund  
Black Economic Alliance  
Black Women's Roundtable  
Multicultural Media Telecom and Internet Council  
National Action Network

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<sup>1</sup> [Switched Off: Why Are One in Five U.S. Households Not Online? | National Telecommunications and Information Administration \(ntia.gov\)](https://www.ntia.gov/publications/switched-off-why-are-one-in-five-u.s.-households-not-online)

National Black Farmers Association  
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging  
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation  
National Organization of Black County Officials, Inc.  
NOBEL Women  
National Urban League  
Rainbow Push  
Skinner Institute  
US Black Chambers

Cc:

Vice President Kamala Harris  
The Honorable Patty Murray  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
The Honorable Ted Cruz  
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
The Honorable Steve Scalise  
Mr. Stephen Benjamin  
Mr. Mitch Landrieu  
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member  
Mr. Tom Perez  
Mr. Steve Ricchetti  
Ms. Shalanda Young  
Mr. Jeff Zients