

Sen. Markey's Emergency Educational Connections Act of 2020 - Background for Distribution

[Emergency Educational Connections Act of 2020](#): Introduced by Senators Markey, Van Hollen Bennet, Hassan and Schatz.

Original Co-Sponsors at Introduction (46): Markey, Van Hollen, Bennet, Hassan, Schatz, Feinstein, Schumer, Cantwell, Murray, Booker, Jones, Blumenthal, Gillibrand, King, Baldwin, Brown, Durbin, Harris, Murphy, Wyden, Cardin, Shaheen, Sanders, Reed, Klobuchar, Cortez Masto, Rosen, Hirono, Smith, Merkley, Duckworth, Warren, Whitehouse, Udall, Peters, Kaine, Menendez, Casey, Carper, Sinema, Coons, Heinrich, Warner, Stabenow, Tester, and Leahy.

- This bill would appropriate \$4 billion for an Emergency Connectivity Fund, administered through the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) E-Rate program, for schools and libraries to support distance and remote learning for millions of students without home internet access exacerbated by the COVID-19 emergency.
- School buildings have closed in every state in the country in response to this pandemic; 43 states, 4 territories and the District of Columbia have already announced that their schools will not reopen this school year; and some states and districts are already considering expanding summer school options and planning for the possibility of interruptions to classroom teaching and learning next academic year.
- An estimated 12 million students and some of their teachers currently lacking home internet access and unable to participate in online classes now and in the future, there is great need for Senator Markey and his colleagues' legislation and for its inclusion in any COVID-19 relief measures.
- Senate leadership must act quickly to ensure kids don't have to wait any longer to learn. Every day that passes kids fall further behind - some [reports](#) estimate that, due to the pandemic, kids may fall a full year behind.
- The E-Rate program is the best vehicle to disseminate funds quickly to schools and libraries for the purchase of Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers, connected devices and advanced information and technology services.
- The E-Rate program's successful equity-based 22-year history of keeping public and private schools and public libraries connected to the internet demonstrates why it is best positioned to disseminate critical emergency funds to schools and libraries – with priority to those with the greatest need. Having committed over \$50 billion in support to schools and libraries since its founding in 1998, the E-Rate can handle processing promptly and effectively the \$4 billion in homework gap funding called for by Senator Markey's legislation, ensuring an equitable distribution.
- By using the existing E-Rate program to distribute these funds the dollars can quickly flow to the right entities (schools and libraries), who are intimately familiar with the precise scope of the need, and will reduce costs associated with the administrative deployment of the program so more of these critical federal dollars can flow to actual service and devices.
- The FCC can deliver on the bill's necessary expedited timeline, as well. As it has shown in its responses to other disasters, including hurricanes, the FCC can quickly move E-Rate support to affected schools and libraries, making the necessary tailored adjustments to the program needed during this emergency.

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Connect All Students [Educator Story Bank](#)

Senator Markey's [Press Release](#)

Education Groups [Letter](#) in Support

How long will this last? For the duration of a “Public Health Emergency Declaration”

How much funding? 4 billion for fiscal year 2020 and available through fiscal year 2021

How will this be administered? Through the FCC’s E-rate program, the appropriated funds can only be used for the purposes of the Emergency Connectivity Fund and not for other aspects of the E-rate program or the USF program. Within 7 days of enactment FCC will promulgate regulations providing for the benefit, regarding amounts made available from the Emergency Connectivity Fund.

What is offered? Equipment includes: Connected Devices (laptops, tablets and other computing devices), Connectivity equipment (hot spots, routers, modems etc)

Who can offer? Schools (Public, Private, Tribal) and Libraries (Public and Tribal)

Is there an eligibility factor for recipients? No, School and Libraries determine need at their own discretion. However, the legislation requires that this benefit flows to patrons of the library, and school teachers and students who the school or library believes does not have access to service and/or equipment at their residence.

Are there restrictions on the equipment? Schools and Libraries may not sell the equipment but can exchange for upgraded equipment. School and Libraries will retain the equipment after the close of the public health emergency.