



March 27, 2020

Dear Telecommunications Companies:

Across the United States, 54 million children are not in class as their schools have been forced to close due to the rapid spread of the coronavirus. In this unstable and uncertain time, districts are working to ensure children stay connected to their school communities so learning can continue and families can get the crucial health information they need. This is a monumental challenge given the number of children who don't have a computer, a tablet, or a way to get online.

As a bipartisan network of state and district education leaders who oversee systems that collectively serve more than 7 million students, we need your help. As little as 50 percent of students in some of our members' districts have the connectivity and technology needed for a meaningful distance learning experience.

We appreciate the steps that many of you have taken to expand broadband and WiFi access for families with school-age children by, among other things, waiving installation fees on some new service plans, waiving late fees, and opening hotspots for public use.

Yet given the scale of the digital divide in our country and the current national emergency, we ask that you please immediately suspend policies that keep families with school-age children from obtaining service. These include, for example, policies that require people to pay off any outstanding balance on their account in order to get reconnected. Even in instances where districts can provide devices to their students, many children are unable to use those computers and tablets because they can't get online. Reporter Alia Malik recently highlighted this and other related issues in the [San Antonio Express-News](#).

We are living in extraordinary times. Considering the widespread disruption and economic upheaval caused by this crisis, and the financial strain that an increasing number of families will face, please remove obstacles that prevent students from learning while they are away from school.

Everything you do is focused on keeping people connected. Never has that been more important. As Barbara Jenkins, the superintendent of Orange County Public Schools in Florida and one of our members, recently [said](#), the "education system as we knew it simply does not exist today."

Schools must now teach their students online. We need your help to make that possible and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Magee', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Magee
CEO