



May 11, 2020

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leadership:

We, Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC), a coalition of community colleges write to thank you for your continued leadership with COVID emergency response packages to date, including the nearly \$14 billion for institutions of higher education authorized through the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*. The initial CARES resources are crucial to helping our students achieve their educational goals but needs remain. Today we are writing to ensure that the broadband and connectivity needs of our higher education students, and particularly those who attend community colleges, are not forgotten. Specifically, we would like to request that any broadband initiative included in the next COVID-19 package not only focus on K12 education students, but also provides connectivity for college students who lack sufficient internet access and technology to continue with their education.

RAMC is a coalition of State and individual community college systems from across the country, representing over 120 colleges and 1.5 million students. Community colleges serve 45 percent of all first-time freshmen, 40 percent of our students are the first in their family to attend college, and a significant proportion of our nation's minority undergraduates attend community colleges, including 42 percent of all African American undergraduates, nearly half of all Hispanic undergraduates, and 56 percent of Native American undergraduates. Community colleges have historically existed to make higher education accessible for everyone and match employers' need for a large, diverse workforce. We know the importance of preparing more Americans to enter the workforce with the skills they need to compete for in-demand jobs.

Amid this current national emergency, our institutions, and many other community colleges across the nation, have worked tirelessly to ensure that our students have access to the education and supportive services they need to continue on with their programs. This has meant moving thousands of courses to new [on-line modalities](#) and helping the many students who are struggling through this crisis such as offering free

[Wi-Fi](#) via [hotspots](#), creating a [pop-up food pantry](#) for students in need, and lending [office space](#) in order to provide mental health services during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Many of our colleges have also stepped up to help meet the broader needs of our communities during these unprecedented times. Many RAMC colleges have not only loaned out [ventilators](#) to area hospitals to meet the critical needs for these lifesaving devices, but also [created](#) them with [3D printers](#). Our community colleges have also been [donating thousands](#) of dollars' worth of [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) to area hospitals in response to the growing COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, RAMC members have helped small businesses apply for the Small Business Administration (SBA) loans to keep vital workforce partners afloat during these uncertain times.

In addition to all the services mentioned above, many of our K-12 schools are looking to our systems to assist them with remote learning during these times. While there has been an emphasis on the needs of connectivity within the K-12 systems, there has been a dearth of conversation around the needs of students in higher education. As noted in various news [articles](#), our students also suffer from lack of access to the internet at home that make it difficult for them to continue learning. Although we have been able to provide Wi-Fi hotspots around our campuses as noted above, it is not sufficient for our students to continue with distance learning for the foreseeable future.

Accordingly, RAMC believes additional support is needed from the Federal government to aid our students during this crisis and ensure America has the educated and trained workforce to rebuild our economy. We urge Congress to ensure that any broadband initiative included in the next COVID-19 package not only focus on K12 education students, but also provides connectivity for college students who lack sufficient internet access and technology to continue with their education.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to working with you to ensure the needs of our students and families are met during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,



Joe May  
Board Chair, Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)  
Chancellor, Dallas County Community College District

CC: Representative Frank Pallone, Jr., Chair, House Committee on Energy & Commerce;  
Representative Greg Walden, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy & Commerce;  
Senator Rodger Wicker, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science &  
Transportation; Senator Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce,  
Science & Transportation