![CCD logo - Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities]

July 26, 2023

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick, Co-Chair
Congressional Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Dingell, Co-Chair
Congressional Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
102 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Letter Urging Congress to Support Additional Funding for the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program.

Dear Representative Fitzpatrick and Representative Dingell:

The under-signed members of the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) Technology & Telecommunications Task Force write to express our strong support for the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and to urge Congress to allocate additional funding to this crucial initiative. By investing in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program, we can address the existing digital disparities faced by people with disabilities and promote a more inclusive and equitable society. As the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus, we appreciate your leadership in ensuring that the ACP continues to close the digital divide for people with disabilities and millions of eligible households across our nation.

The CCD is the country's largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society free from racism, ableism, sexism, and xenophobia, as well as LGBTQ+ based discrimination and religious intolerance.

Access to affordable and robust broadband connectivity is a fundamental necessity in our increasingly digital world. Unfortunately, many people with disabilities face significant barriers when it comes to accessing affordable broadband services. Broadband is no longer just a convenience; it is a vital tool that enables individuals to access educational resources, healthcare services, employment and job opportunities, as well as civic, community, and social engagement:

Access to Education – Reliable Internet access is crucial for students with disabilities to participate in remote learning, access online educational materials using their assistive

technology, and engage with their peers and teachers. By ensuring the longevity of the ACP, more students will have the opportunity to succeed academically and develop essential skills for the future.

Healthcare Services – Many individuals with disabilities rely on telehealth services to receive specialized medical care, consultations, and therapies. Adequate funding for the program will enable people with disabilities to access healthcare professionals and services remotely, reducing barriers to care, such as timely and independent access to transportation, while improving their overall health outcomes.

Economic, Employment, and Job Opportunities – Broadband has become a vital platform for finding employment, accessing job training resources, starting online businesses, and working remotely. By ensuring affordable connectivity, people with disabilities can explore, pursue, and participate in various economic opportunities, promoting and ensuring financial independence and inclusivity.

Civic, Community, and Social Engagement and Inclusion – Access to broadband allows people with disabilities to connect with others, fulfill civic and community responsibilities, participate in social networks, and engage in recreational activities. Additional funding for the ACP would empower more people with disabilities to overcome isolation and build meaningful relationships as integrated and engaged members of their communities and beyond.

As you are acutely aware, while the ACP has made great strides in making broadband services more affordable to low-income households, not only must the progress we have made be sustained, much more outreach and household inclusion remains to be done. In fact, the FCC's work to engage with community and disability outreach partners has barely begun. These organizations and grant recipients are only now receiving the necessary support from the Commission for their outreach and enrollment efforts. If the Program funding were to lapse, millions of households would be left behind and these government-supported outreach efforts will have been for nought. By providing additional funding to this program, Congress can maintain its commitment to the more than 19 million households already served by the ACP and expand the reach of the program to the projected 51.6 million eligible households across our nation.

For these reasons, the under-signed member organizations of the CCD Technology and Telecommunications Task Force pledge our support to work with you to secure additional funding for the ACP. With a sustained, adequate federal investment, we can ensure that affordability is not a barrier to people with disabilities having the necessary tools to live healthier lives, fuller access to work, and to fully engage with their communities in the digital age. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the importance of the ACP for people with disabilities in more detail, please contact the CCD Technology and Telecommunications Task Force Co-Chairs: Audrey Busch-Treussard (audrey.busch-treussard@ataporg.org); Laura Kaloi (lkaloi@stridepolicy.com); & Clark Rachfal (crachfal@acb.org).

Sincerely,
Access Ready
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Council of the Blind

American Foundation for the Blind
American Printing House for the Blind
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network
Family Voice
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
Perkins School for the Blind
United Spinal Association

Cc: The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee;
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee.