



## The Student Internet Equity Program

Nearly **1 in 5 teens** and **1 in 4 Black teens** does not have access to the internet or a device at home. In states with the largest digital divide, **half of all students** lack adequate access – a critical national issue with long-term implications for students, families, and our communities.

### **This problem disproportionately impacts students of color and people living in poverty.**

Low-income Black, Brown, rural, and Native American secondary students are disproportionately impacted. Thirty-five percent of families with K-12 students earning under \$30,000 lack home access. The number increases to 41% of Black families, 36.2% of rural families, and 34.2% of Native American families. For K-12 families earning under \$25,000, the outlook is even bleaker—45% lack internet access at home.

### **Our existing approach isn't working.**

We've focused almost exclusively on infrastructure development to the exclusion of cost and taken a laissez-faire patchwork approach—leaving it to the philanthropic community, the private sector, and local efforts to connect families to discount and subsidy programs. Moreover, these programs don't offer help to low-income families who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch but need help affording internet access at home.

### **Federal leadership is urgently required.**

Middle and high school students—who are at a critical inflection point between higher education and the workforce – should be our priority. The data irrefutably shows that these students need convenient, reliable access to high-quality internet and a device at home for homework and develop the digital skills necessary for college and workforce success.

We can close the digital divide for \$29 million middle and high school students in this country using the Student Internet Equity Program (SIEP) as early as September 2022, at an estimated cost to the government of \$3.9B averaged over five years.

### **Building on an existing framework to close the gap.**

SIEP is a simple model that builds on the “bulk purchase” framework that we've seen around the country during this global health crisis as local governments have used federal, state, and local dollars to make bulk purchases of internet access and devices for students. SIEP is unique because costs are shared between the family, government and cable and telecom providers. Under SIEP, families will qualify for a discount or subsidy based on family income segregated into three simple income qualifying tiers. Students will be connected to this benefit at the school level, ensuring the most significant family participation level.

**Here's who is behind SIEC's mission to ensure equitable access to technology beyond the classroom:**



SIEC is led by former cable telecommunications executive and law partner Donna Rattley Washington.

As a former law partner, cable system general manager, government relations executive, and nonprofit education executive, Donna has traversed a 20-year leadership journey spanning education, digital adoption, legislative affairs, management, and telecommunications.

With her background leading the roll-out of the Comcast Internet Essentials program—the largest corporate digital adoption program in the country—in the mid-Atlantic region, Donna developed invaluable insights into the most effective strategies to ensure digital adoption for students. Further, she possesses in-depth knowledge of the operational, technical, and financial workings of cable and telecommunications systems. She is intimately familiar with the complex challenges and costs of providing services in dense urban environments and rural and suburban communities.

Along with her career experience, Donna holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Brandeis University and a JD from Georgetown University Law Center. Rounding out her expertise is her legal work as a partner with the law firm that became Davis, Wright & Tremaine, where she learned what it takes to address the unique challenges associated with scaling services to communities across the country.

In addition, Stephanie Weiner, partner at the law firm of Harris, Wiltshire & Grannis LLP, and former Associate General Counsel and Special Advisor to the Chairman on Internet Law and Policy at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and Julie Veach, partner at Harris, Wiltshire & Grannis, LLP and former Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau and Deputy General Counsel, FCC, have signed on as counsel to SIEC. Their legal expertise and strategic advice will add immeasurably to SIEC's organizational strength and capacity to achieve its mission of digital equity for our nation's students.

Donna is also joined at SIEC by several former alumni from Education Superhighway who have helped provide research, data, and communications support. In addition, SIEC's founding board brings a wealth of education and telecommunications experience.

# The Solution: A Comprehensive National Program that Provides Subsidized and Discounted Internet Service and Computer Access to America's Middle and High School Students



## Affordable

Qualify for a government subsidy up to 400% of Federal Poverty Level.



## Aligned

Students are enrolled at school or district level. Eligibility & terms and conditions set by program to maximize participation and continuity of service.

*\*Note: 400% is also the eligibility cap for the Affordable Care Act.*



## Ready

Program builds on existing structures and can connect all middle and high school students online at home in 2021.

# Key Facts



Costs are shared between government, families and providers.



Federal government pays all government costs.



Costs of service differs based on 1 of 3 connectivity solutions used:  
Wired, Mobile, Satellite.



Speeds: 100/25Mbps.



Data Usage: Prevailing Industry Standard



## Government Cost Summary:

- \$3.9B average annual cost Years 1-5
- Year 1 cost: \$5.8B (Includes Year 1 computer costs of \$2.5 B)
- Years 2-5 computer cots: \$970M