

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3362

To require the Federal Communications Commission to use a portion of the proceeds from the auction of the C-band to fund measures to provide students with access to the internet at home, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Mr. VAN HOLLEN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To require the Federal Communications Commission to use a portion of the proceeds from the auction of the C-band to fund measures to provide students with access to the internet at home, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Homework Gap Trust
5 Fund Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) According to the Joint Economic Com-
2 mittee, as many as 12,000,000 students in the
3 United States do not have access to the internet at
4 home.

5 (2) Lack of internet access at home for a stu-
6 dent can lead to reduced academic preparedness, de-
7 creased academic performance, and decreased class-
8 room engagement in school.

9 (3) Nearly 50 percent of students in the United
10 States have reported being unable to complete a
11 homework assignment because those students did
12 not have access to the internet or a computer.

13 (4) Seventeen percent of students in the United
14 States do not have access to computers at home and
15 18 percent do not have home access to broadband
16 internet access service.

17 (5) Computer ownership and internet use are
18 strongly correlated with household income.

19 (6) Approximately 30 percent of households in
20 the United States with incomes below \$50,000 do
21 not have a connection to broadband internet access
22 service.

23 (7) Students without broadband internet access
24 service at home are more likely to be students from
25 low-income families, students of color, or students

1 who live in households with lower levels of parental
2 education.

3 (8) More than 50 percent of teachers in low-in-
4 come school districts report that limited access to
5 technology outside of school for students limits the
6 ability of teachers to—

7 (A) advance and implement digital learning
8 initiatives; and

9 (B) promote digital literacy.

10 (9) According to the Commission, approxi-
11 mately 70 percent of teachers in the United States
12 assign homework that requires access to broadband
13 internet access service.

14 (10) Research has shown that teenagers who
15 have access to home computers are 6 to 8 percent
16 more likely to graduate from high school than teen-
17 agers who do not have access to home computers.

18 (11) The homework gap affects students in
19 both rural and urban communities.

20 (12) Ensuring that students have access to
21 broadband internet access service will reduce the
22 digital divide and can help reduce economic, edu-
23 cational, and social inequalities.

1 **SEC. 3. HOMEWORK GAP TRUST FUND.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSE.—There is estab-
3 lished in the Treasury of the United States a fund to be
4 known as the “Homework Gap Trust Fund”—

5 (1) which shall be administered by the Commis-
6 sion; and

7 (2) the purpose of which is to provide funding
8 for measures that help to—

9 (A) close the digital divide; and

10 (B) promote digital equality with respect
11 to school-aged children.

12 (b) DEPOSIT OF PROCEEDS.—Notwithstanding any
13 provision of section 309(j) of the Communications Act of
14 1934 (47 U.S.C. 309(j)), not less than \$2,000,000,000
15 and not more than \$4,000,000,000 of the proceeds re-
16 ceived from systems of competitive bidding conducted with
17 respect to the use of the C-band shall be deposited in the
18 Homework Gap Trust Fund.

19 (c) USE OF HOMEWORK GAP TRUST FUND
20 AMOUNTS.—The Commission shall use the amounts in the
21 Homework Gap Trust Fund to fund measures that seek
22 to ensure that all students in the United States have ac-
23 cess to broadband internet access service at home, includ-
24 ing by—

25 (1) purchasing any necessary equipment for
26 that purpose; and

1 (2) providing those students with hotspot de-
2 vices.

3 (d) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
4 of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the
5 Commission shall submit to Congress a report regarding,
6 for the year covered by the report—

7 (1) the number of recipients of funding pro-
8 vided under subsection (c);

9 (2) the number of students who obtained access
10 to broadband internet access service as a result of
11 funding provided under subsection (c);

12 (3) the number of students in the United States
13 who continue to face unequal access to digital de-
14 vices and broadband internet access service, which
15 prevents those students from completing homework
16 assignments;

17 (4) the use of hotspot devices provided with
18 funding provided under subsection (c); and

19 (5) the amount of data used per hotspot device
20 described in paragraph (4).

21 (e) RULEMAKING.—Not later than 180 days after the
22 date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall issue
23 final rules to carry out this section.

24 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

25 In this Act:

1 (1) C-BAND.—The term “C-band” means the
2 band of electromagnetic spectrum between 3.7
3 gigahertz and 4.2 gigahertz, inclusive.

4 (2) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
5 means the Federal Communications Commission.

6 (3) DIGITAL DIVIDE.—The term “digital di-
7 vide” means the economic, educational, and social
8 inequalities that exist between individuals, house-
9 holds, businesses, and geographic areas at different
10 socioeconomic levels due to their differing abilities to
11 access information and communications technology.

12 (4) DIGITAL EQUALITY.—The term “digital
13 equality” means the activities that are necessary to
14 ensure that, as a means to enhance and promote
15 education, employment, and civic and cultural par-
16 ticipation, all individuals in the United States have
17 access to, and the use of, affordable information and
18 communication technologies, including—

19 (A) reliable fixed and wireless broadband
20 internet access service;

21 (B) internet-enabled devices that meet the
22 needs of the user; and

23 (C) applications and online content de-
24 signed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency,
25 participation, and collaboration, including—

- 1 (i) obtaining access to digital literacy
2 training;
- 3 (ii) the provision of quality technical
4 support; and
- 5 (iii) obtaining basic awareness of
6 measures to ensure online privacy and cy-
7 bersecurity.

8 (5) DIGITAL LITERACY.—The term “digital lit-
9 eracy” means the ability of an individual to use cog-
10 nitive and technical skills and technology to effec-
11 tively find, analyze, organize, share, create, and com-
12 municate information using digital platforms.

13 (6) HOTSPOT DEVICE.—The term “hotspot de-
14 vice” means a portable device—

15 (A) that connects to broadband internet
16 access service using a cellular data connection;

17 (B) to which other devices wirelessly con-
18 nect by means of Wi-Fi; and

19 (C) that enables the devices described in
20 subparagraph (B) to connect to the broadband
21 internet access service described in subpara-
22 graph (A).

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