

COVID-19 RELIEF PACKAGE: \$7 Billion in New Broadband Funding

The \$900 billion COVID-19 relief package – included within the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 – **appropriates \$7 billion for broadband related efforts**. The new funding for broadband initiatives can be used by local, state, and federal entities to purchase connectivity and devices to support education, telehealth, and broadband expansion.

BROADBAND PROVISIONS

A large portion – **\$3.2 billion** – will go towards creating the *Emergency Broadband Benefit Program*, which will help low-income individuals purchase connectivity, as well as connected devices, during the pandemic. This program, administered by the FCC, will reimburse broadband internet service providers for connecting eligible low-income households.

► **Discounts available for qualifying households include:**

- Up to \$50/month for eligible service (up to \$75/month for Tribal)
- Up to \$100 for connected devices – specifically laptops, desktop computers or tablets

The relief package also includes funding for the following broadband projects:

Broadband Connectivity in Tribal and Unserved Areas. The package creates and appropriates **\$1 billion** to the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will make grants to eligible entities to increase broadband access and adoption on tribal land.

Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Program. The package allocates **\$300 million** for NTIA to provide competitive-based grants for covered partnerships to deploy fixed broadband infrastructure in unserved communities.

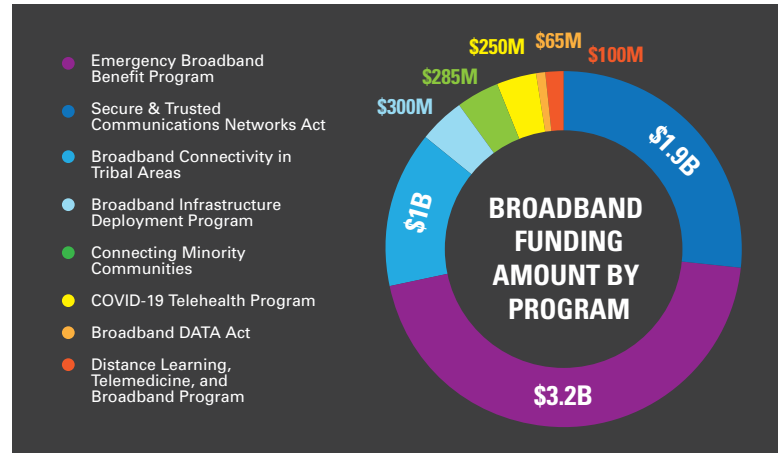
Connecting Minority Communities. The package appropriates **\$285 million** to (1) establish an Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives within NTIA, and (2) establish a Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program to expand broadband access in low-income communities.

COVID-19 Telehealth Program. The package appropriates **\$250 million** in additional funds for the FCC's COVID-19 Telehealth Program, which was originally established under the CARES Act.

Broadband DATA Act. The package provides **\$65 million** for the FCC to implement the Broadband DATA Act, which requires the FCC to collect granular data regarding broadband internet access and create maps determining the availability of broadband internet access service across the U.S.

Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program. The package provides over **\$100 million** in additional funds for the Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program administered under the Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development.

Secure & Trusted Communications Networks Act. The package provides **\$1.9 billion** for telecommunication providers with fewer than 10 million subscribers to rip-and-replace Huawei/ZTE equipment with secure equipment.



EDUCATION & ONLINE LEARNING

The stimulus bill also provides nearly \$82 billion of additional funding to the Education Stabilization Fund established by the CARES Act. State, local and education officials have discretion to apply some of this money to online learning technology and connectivity.