



March 12, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

As the representatives of millions of students, educators, librarians, administrators, community members, and parents, we write to offer our support for your efforts to review the resilience of semiconductor supply chains. The education sector is relying on technology powered by chips to administer remote learning during the pandemic and address long-standing issues like the digital divide and homework gap. We hope that this supply chain review illuminates opportunities to strengthen global semiconductor supply chains, increase domestic chip manufacturing capacity, and boost global chip production for all the benefit of all industries that use technology powered by semiconductors.

Technology can be transformative to the education experience; tech can improve learning outcomes, enhance the classroom experience, and help students develop the skills they need to compete in today's demanding workforce. The education, public, and private sectors have long partnered to expand access to technology to all students in the United States. However, the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare significant inequities and barriers facing too many Americans because they lack access to critical technologies.

With the unprecedented shift to online learning, millions of students were left disconnected from school at the start of the pandemic because they lacked the resources to learn from home. Months later, an estimated 17 million students – or twenty-nine percent of all K-12 students – are still disconnected from their studies because they do not have access to broadband connectivity, devices, or both. It is well known that people of color are disproportionately harmed by lack of access to broadband, as are people in poorer urban and rural areas of the country. Far too many students remain at risk of being left behind because they fall on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The nation's 117,000 libraries have long provided access to digital technology as well as training and services that enable people to improve their lives. Libraries serve all community members, from students to retirees, veterans, entrepreneurs, and families. Libraries provide essential services such as access to and lending of laptops and hotspots, and WiFi access in the library and

across communities. During the pandemic, hotspot lending increased to nearly one-quarter of public libraries. With additional funding from the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*, libraries will be substantially increasing their lending of internet-enabled devices and expanding WiFi access in communities.

To address these issues, we must continue to work to close the digital divide. To that end, we greatly appreciated your direction to the Federal Communications Commission to increase connectivity options for students and library users lacking reliable home broadband during this crisis. This directive, coupled with significant investments by Congress and the private sector, especially those provided for in the *American Rescue Plan Act*, will help reconnect students during the pandemic and long after it is tampered.

We are concerned, however, that long-term technology access issues, such as global semiconductor shortages, will interfere with efforts to equip students and library users with technology and close long-standing disparities, particularly with respect to connectivity. Surging global demand for semiconductors is causing chip shortages that are impacting numerous industries, including the education sector. As evidenced by the 17 million disconnected students, the demand for technology enabled by semiconductors has been simultaneously underscored and exacerbated by the pandemic.

In addition to offering our support for your review of semiconductor supply chain resiliency, we urge you work with the Congress to invest in U.S. semiconductor leadership to the benefit of all chip users.

Thank you for your attention to our views on this matter. We look forward to working with you to address technology shortages and support the nation's students.

Sincerely,

Keith Krueger
Chief Executive Officer
CoSN - the Consortium for School Networking

Alan S. Inouye, Ph.D.
Senior Director, Public Policy & Government Relations
American Library Association