



September 29, 2020

Chairman Dan Huberty  
Members of the Committee  
Texas House Public Education Committee  
Texas Capitol Station  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

**Re: Comments on Interim Charge 2**

Chairman Huberty and Committee Members,

Thank you for your work and attention to improving broadband access across our state. I would especially like to commend your efforts to provide connectivity to our students through the statewide Operation Connectivity initiative.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the importance of broadband connectivity for Texans to access essential services, such as remote learning for students, and allowing our labor force to function. As you are well aware, the pandemic highlighted Texas' digital divide and further exacerbated broadband disparities across the state.

At the onset of the pandemic, an estimated 3 million households – over 8 million individuals – did not subscribe to at-home-broadband, ranking Texas 38<sup>th</sup> in nation for broadband subscriptions.<sup>i</sup> The income gap associated with subscriptions is similarly stark. Fewer than half of the state's households earning less than \$20,000 a year subscribed to at-home-broadband, compared to 82 percent of households earning \$75,000 that did.<sup>ii</sup> Additionally, according to recent data produced by Connected Nation Texas, nearly 1 million individuals, 89 percent residing in rural communities<sup>iii</sup>, do not have adequate broadband infrastructure to sufficiently support access to essential services.<sup>iv</sup>

The Greater Houston Partnership is committed to solving the digital divide in our state. We view broadband as critical infrastructure for continued global competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a pathway for improving the quality of life for all Texans. By 2036, Texas is expected to add nearly 10 million people, increasing our population to 38 million. This growth will provide various opportunities for our state, and broadband access will play a critical role in maximizing our potential. When examining this issue, the Partnership encourages the Committee to take a holistic view of broadband access to included other public interests alongside remote learning.

Again, the Greater Houston Partnership would like to thank the Committee for its (or committee members for their) time and attention to improving broadband access in our state. We look forward to working with you on this important issue in the near future. Please do not hesitate to contact Ben Melson, [bmelson@houston.org](mailto:bmelson@houston.org), for questions or to request assistance on this issue.

Sincerely,



Bob Harvey  
President & CEO

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<sup>i</sup> United State Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey, Presence and Types of Internet Subscriptions, Note: excludes satellite and cellular services.  
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0100000US.04000.001&tid=ACSDT1Y2018.B28002&hidePreview=true>

<sup>ii</sup> United State Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey, Percentage of Households with Subscription to Any Broadband Service. <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums/2018/?#>

<sup>iii</sup> Connected Nation Texas, What Can Texas Do?, <https://connectednation.org/texas/what-can-texas-do/>

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