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Ask the Mayor

Muriel Bowser
Mayor

Mayor Bowser Announces $3.3 Million Investment to Provide Home Internet to Low-Income DC Students

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(Washington, DC) – Today, Mayor Muriel Bowser launched the $3.3 million Internet for All initiative to provide free internet access for up to 25,000 disconnected low-income students and families from DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools. The funding, allocated from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), will cover SNAP and TANF eligible families for the 2020-2021 School Year.

"During this virtual school term, we know how critical it is for all of our students to have internet access to successfully learn at home and stay connected to their teachers outside of the classroom," said Mayor Bowser. "This investment continues our commitment not only to supporting families during virtual school term, but also to building a more digitally-inclusive DC in the long-term."

The Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO), in partnership with OSSE, will coordinate Internet for All and bring broadband – which is more reliable and powerful than mobile MiFi devices or cellular connections – directly to homes through Comcast's Internet Essentials and RCN's Internet First programs.

"The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the need for bridging the digital divide in Washington, DC," said Chief Technology Officer Lindsey Parker. "As schools begin classes online, students without regular access to the internet are at a severe disadvantage. The Bowser Administration is committed to work with our partners and our community to break this cycle and create a fair shot for everyone in DC."

OCTO is reaching out to eligible families via email, phone, and text message to directly connect households with students enrolled in DCPS and public charter schools to the internet providers. More information on the program is available at https://www.techtogetherdc.com/internetforall. Parents and guardians with questions should reach out directly to their students' schools.

"For nearly a decade, Comcast has been dedicated to bridging the digital divide in Washington, D.C., and across the nation, with our Internet Essentials program – which to date has connected millions of low-income families to the internet. We're proud to partner with Mayor Bowser, the Office of the Chief Technology Officer, and D.C. Public and Charter Schools to help create a program that can connect thousands more K-12 students and families online," said Mary McLaughlin, senior vice president of

Comcast's Beltway Region. "A problem as vast and complex as this one requires all of us to work together to ensure these students get connected and stay engaged with distance learning throughout the academic year."

"Our internet First program is affordable internet designed to help families and students in low-income households to have reliable access to the internet. It will enable students to home school, do homework, and access educational resources and more," said Sanford Ames, SVP/General Manager of RCN's Washington, DC region. "Our customers, the communities we serve, and government agencies are all counting on us to deliver this critical tool as students return to school whether at home or in the classroom. We are committed and ready to do our part in taking care of each other during this time."

This partnership also marks the launch of OCTO's new Tech Together initiative, a partnership between public, private, and nonprofit sectors to bridge the digital divide in the District through:

- Increasing access to internet service
- Increasing access to internet-enabled devices and IT support
- Demystifying technology through awareness, training and access to opportunities
- Increasing technology savviness within DC Government.

To find out more or how you can help go to techtogether.dc.gov.