116TH CONGRESS
2D Session

H. R. 6394

To help small business broadband providers keep customers connected.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 25, 2020

Mr. Welch (for himself, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Young, and Mr. Gianforte) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Appropriations

A BILL

To help small business broadband providers keep customers connected.

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

SECTION 1. KEEPING CRITICAL CONNECTIONS EMER-
GENCY FUND.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

(1) the term “Commission” means the Federal
Communications Commission;

(2) the term “covered program” means a pro-
gram established by a small business broadband pro-
vider under which the small business broadband pro-
vider, at any time during the COVID–19 emergency period, voluntarily—

(A) provides a customer with free or discounted broadband service, or free upgrades of existing service to meet certain capacity and speed needs, due specifically to the presence of a student in the household of the customer who needs distance learning capability; or

(B) refrains from disconnecting broadband service provided to an existing customer due to nonpayment or underpayment if the customer—

(i) has a household income, at the time of the nonpayment or underpayment, that does not exceed 135 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines (as determined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services);

(ii) is unable to make a full payment due specifically to the economic impact of the national emergency described in paragraph (3); and

(iii) provides sufficient documentation to the provider to show that the customer meets the criteria under clauses (i) and (ii);
(3) the term “COVID–19 emergency period” means the period during which the national emergency declaration by the President under the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is in effect; and

(4) the term “small business broadband provider” means a broadband provider that provides broadband service to fewer than 250,000 customers.

(b) FUNDING.—

(1) APPROPRIATION.—Out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, there is appropriated to the Commission $2,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2020, to remain available until expended, to reimburse small business broadband providers for the costs of carrying out a covered program.

(2) RULES.—The Commission shall promulgate rules on an expedited basis, and without regard to section 553 of title 5, United States Code, regarding the provision of reimbursements to small business broadband providers under paragraph (1).