



**NORFOLK STATE
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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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April 5, 2021

Federal Communication Commission
Ms. Julie A. Veach, Chief
Wireline Competition Bureau
45 L Street, NE
Washington, DC 2054

Re: Public Comment: Emergency Connectivity Fund (DA 21-317)

Dear Ms. Veach:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comment on the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Wireline Competition Bureau's rulemaking related to the "Emergency Connectivity Fund" recently authorized under the *American Rescue Plan*. Specifically, Norfolk State University (NSU) recommends that eligibility for the Emergency Connectivity Fund be widened to include institutions of higher education serving traditionally underserved student populations with Pell-eligibility of 60% or greater.

As Virginia's largest Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Norfolk State has a rich tradition of providing first generation and traditionally underserved students with access to a high-quality college degree. More than 70% of our students are Pell-eligible and struggle financially. These challenges have only been amplified by the pandemic. As a result of COVID-19, many of our students and their families have faced significant financial hardships. These challenges have only served to further exacerbate the "digital divide." While the funding provided under the federal COVID-19 relief packages have been instrumental in helping us deliver the resources needed to keep our students connected to campus, the need for funding to support connectivity will only continue to grow as we push toward a new semester and adapt to our new normal.

We fully support America's elementary and secondary schools and libraries, but also believe that there is sufficient justification and need for a targeted expansion of eligibility for the Emergency Connectivity Fund to include those institutions of higher education that serve students facing the greatest financial need.

Thank you for your consideration of this public comment and for your service to our nation.

Sincerely,

Javaune M. Adams-Gaston, Ph.D.
President