

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 608

To help small business broadband providers keep customers connected.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 4, 2021

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. CRAMER, Ms. SMITH, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. ERNST, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. KELLY, Mr. COTTON, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. WARNER, Mr. HOEVEN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. WARNOCK, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BENNET, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. HAWLEY, and Ms. ROSEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To help small business broadband providers keep customers connected.

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

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Keeping Critical Con-
5 nections Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. KEEPING CRITICAL CONNECTIONS EMERGENCY** 7 **FUND.**

8 (a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section—

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

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

8 (A) provides a customer with free or dis-
9 counted broadband service, or free upgrades of
10 existing service to meet certain capacity and
11 speed needs, due specifically to the presence of
12 a student in the household of the customer who
13 needs distance learning capability; or

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

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

23 (ii) is unable to make a full payment
24 due specifically to the economic impact of

1 the national emergency described in para-
2 graph (3); and

3 (iii) provides sufficient documentation
4 to the provider to show that the customer
5 meets the criteria under clauses (i) and
6 (ii);

7 (3) the term “COVID–19 emergency period”
8 means the period during which the national emer-
9 gency declaration by the President under the Na-
10 tional Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.)
11 with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019
12 (COVID–19) is in effect; and

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

16 (b) FUNDING.—

17 (1) APPROPRIATION.—Out of any funds in the
18 Treasury not otherwise appropriated, there is appro-
19 priated to the Commission \$2,000,000,000 for fiscal
20 year 2021, to remain available until expended, to re-
21 imburse small business broadband providers for the
22 costs of carrying out a covered program.

23 (2) RULES.—The Commission shall promulgate
24 rules on an expedited basis, and without regard to
25 section 553 of title 5, United States Code, regarding

- 1 the provision of reimbursements to small business
- 2 broadband providers under paragraph (1).

