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GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

Governor Hochul Announces More Than 1 Million Households Enrolled In Federal Affordable Connectivity Program

Federal Program Connects Low-Income Households in New York to More Than \$360 Million in Annual Subsidies to Expand Access to Affordable Broadband

New York Leads Nation in Percentage of Eligible Households Enrolled Following Multi-Agency Outreach Effort

Also Announces Appointment of New ConnectAll Director to Oversee Statewide Initiative to Boost New York's Digital Infrastructure

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced that one million qualifying New York households have enrolled in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program, a nationwide subsidy to expand broadband access to low-income households. Earlier this year, the Governor launched a multi-agency outreach initiative to build awareness of the program and encourage eligible households to enroll. The federal program provides discounts of up to \$30 a month toward internet service for eligible low-income households. More information about ACP, including enrollment information, is available [here](#).

"The pandemic has showed us that, with so many households relying on the internet for work, education, and government services, New Yorkers need access to affordable, dependable broadband," Governor Hochul said. "Thanks to the federal Affordable Connectivity Program and a multi-agency outreach effort in New York State, we're connecting more eligible households to broadband subsidies than anywhere else in the nation. My administration remains committed to expanding affordable broadband, including through our \$1 billion ConnectALL initiative, and helping eligible New Yorkers enroll in this important federal program."

With this milestone, New York is one of the leading states in the nation for ACP enrollment with 30 percent of eligible households currently taking advantage of this federal benefit. Eligible New York households are now collecting more than \$360 million in annual subsidies.

The multi-agency, multi-pronged outreach effort led by the New York State Department of Public Service and Empire State Development continues to increase the number of eligible enrollees daily. DPS and its partner agencies have coordinated with community groups, working groups,

and state associations statewide, with the Governor's ConnectALL initiative to increase enrollment among eligible New Yorkers.

The broadband outreach initiative and their efforts include:

- The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance continues to direct social services agencies to share outreach materials with clients and contracted service providers and published outreach on its social media sites.
- The Office of Children and Family Services continues to include ACP in newsletters, and it promotes the broadband subsidy through social media and local departments of social services, childcare providers and licensors, foster care and voluntary agencies, community multi-services offices, the statewide partnership for households of juvenile-justice-involved youth, runaway and homeless youth shelter operators and domestic violence shelter operators.
- The Department of Motor Vehicles is continuing a social media advertising campaign, broadcasting a public service video on monitors in state-operated DMV offices in New York City, Long Island, and Albany, Westchester, Rockland, and Onondaga counties, as well as mailing approximately five million informational inserts throughout the year when customers receive their driver license.
- Office of the Aging is partnering with DPS to provide materials to 59 county offices for the Aging's meetings, picnics, health fairs, senior centers, social adult day sites and naturally occurring retirement communities. As well as distributed a training recording to more than 1,200 community-based organizations and have created and released a public service announcement, e-newsletter and social media.
- Digital Equity Working Group (DEWG) is a working group led by New York State Education Department's State Library promoting projects to increase digital inclusion at the state and local level.
- Empire State Development is sharing information on the ACP through the Regional Economic Development Councils, the New York State Association of Counties, the Association of Towns, local Digital Equity Coalitions, and ConnectALL's roster of internet service providers.

Department of Public Service CEO Rory M. Christian said, "As part of our advocacy to bring broadband to all households in New York, we are making a significant investment in narrowing the digital divide amongst our citizens that has long persisted."

Empire State Development Commissioner, President, and CEO Hope Knight said, "The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that high-speed internet connectivity no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. Broadband is essential for New Yorkers to go to school, work remotely, find a job, start a business, access healthcare, and connect with loved ones. Improving affordability is a vital component of Governor Hochul's ConnectALL initiative, ensuring that we all have affordable and accessible broadband and laying the groundwork for New York to continue leading the digital economy."

Senator Chuck Schumer said, "The COVID-19 pandemic put a spotlight on how the digital divide impacts our most vulnerable communities in rural and urban communities throughout New York. Access to affordable and reliable internet service is crucial to success in today's modern economy, which is why I fought to include a historic investment to expand high-speed internet access and create the permanent federal Affordable Connectivity Program in the Bipartisan Infrastructure & Jobs Law, which builds on the Emergency Broadband Benefit program I secured in the American Rescue Plan, to finally bridge this divide. Now thanks to the

federal investments I helped deliver, and the steadfast advocacy of Governor Hochul, over a million families across New York have received support through this program ensuring they can stay plugged in to the future."

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand said, "As we continue to work and learn remotely, high-speed internet access is no longer a luxury - it is a necessity. I am proud to have fought for federal funding to make broadband more affordable and accessible for New York families and I encourage everyone in need of internet service to check their eligibility for the Affordable Connectivity Program and apply if they qualify."

Representative Brian Higgins said, "Access to quality, affordable internet is a necessity - a point made abundantly clear as workers, students and businesses relied on virtual connections throughout the pandemic. The Affordable Connectivity Program was one of several measures Congress included in the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help build a stronger and more equitable broadband network. We are thrilled to see, under Governor Hochul's leadership, New York is leading the way in connecting eligible residents to this program, cutting costs for consumers, and ultimately connecting New Yorkers to a world of opportunities."

Representative Yvette D. Clarke said, "In New York and across 21st century America, broadband has become firmly entrenched and intrinsically tied to our everyday lives. From gaining an education, to pursuing job opportunities, to simply reconnecting with our loved ones, stable and affordable internet access is precisely what enables our participation in modern society. And that is why I am beyond thankful for the Affordable Connectivity Program. Governor Hochul's recent announcement on her initiative's remarkable milestone not only proves the program's efficacy, but inspires hope that further successes exist on its horizons. Moreover, it makes our dream of a universally and equitably connected New York an emerging possibility. I look forward to working alongside the Hochul Administration in the years to come to make it a distinct reality."

Representative Paul Tonko said, "Broadband access is a vital resource in this day and age, used every day to connect people to jobs, classrooms, healthcare services, and to one another. Unfortunately, economic barriers and gaps in access hinder millions from receiving quality service. I'm proud of the work we have achieved at the federal level to expand internet, from enacting my ACCESS BROADBAND Act to delivering key broadband resources in our American Rescue Plan and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. I'll continue working to ensure all Americans are delivered reliable, affordable internet access."

Representative Grace Meng said, "Having helped create the Affordable Connectivity Program, I am thrilled to learn that 1 million New York families have enrolled in it. Broadband access, affordability, and digital literacy must be addressed for the millions of Americans who struggle to stay connected in the 21st century. The digital divide existed before the pandemic, and it was exacerbated in the past two years. As one of the key architects of the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund that connected over 13 million students, I am committed to ensuring we end the digital divide in New York and the nation. Earlier this year I brought Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel to talk about this problem with students in my district and address how we can close the digital divide. It is great to see families across the state are beginning to use the Affordable Connectivity Program, and I look forward to continuing to fight for this cause and provide further assistance for families in need."

Representative Joe Morelle said, "Internet access is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity required to participate in modern society, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic. I'm proud to have helped deliver federal funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program and I encourage

everyone who is eligible to take advantage of this benefit. I'm grateful to Governor Hochul for making this a priority, and I look forward to working together to close the digital divide and ensure the internet is affordable and accessible to all New Yorkers."

Representative Jamaal Bowman said, "We've had a longstanding issue where access to necessary, basic services are far outweighed by the need, and that includes high-quality, affordable broadband access. The progress made by Governor Hochul to expand outreach and ensure more New Yorkers benefit from the Affordable Connectivity Program is critical. In this day and age broadband access is essential for work, school, telehealth, and paying bills or applying for aid and resources. The digital divide is prevalent in communities and homes throughout New York and this program is helping us to better bridge that gap, but our work is not done until everyone has access to high-quality broadband, which is a 21st century utility. In my first year in Congress, I introduced the Broadband Justice Act to support the work of wiring buildings, assistance, and other resident support necessary for installing and utilizing high-quality broadband. I am proud to support this initiative and will continue working to make broadband and technology meaningfully accessible for all New Yorkers and communities around the country."

Representative Ritchie Torres said, "Access to internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity for all. Without access to reliable internet, there is no access to remote learning, online banking, and telehealth and much more. Connecting low-income communities to broadband will help bridge the digital divide that has left so many behind. I am grateful to Governor Hochul and federal programs like this that provide over 1 million families with affordable connectivity to essential services."

Representative Pat Ryan said, "It is patently unacceptable that in 2022, every New Yorker does not have access to affordable and accessible broadband. This partnership between New York State and the federal government helps remove those barriers by bringing down the cost of internet service for low-income families. I am proud that we have already enrolled 1 million families in this program, and look forward to continuing to work with our partners at the state level to ensure all eligible New Yorkers are participating."

Governor Hochul also announced the appointment of Joshua Breitbart as the new director of the ConnectALL Office, housed within Empire State Development. As the Director of ConnectALL, Joshua will oversee the transformative \$1 billion investment to boost New York's communities and digital infrastructure announced by Governor Hochul in January as part of her State of the State address.

Joshua Breitbart is the Senior Vice President, ConnectALL, at Empire State Development. In that role, he serves as Director of the Division of Broadband Access at Empire State Development, overseeing the statewide digital equity plan and administering over \$1 billion in public investments across the state. Joshua Breitbart is a former Deputy Chief Technology Officer for New York City. He led development of the city's first comprehensive broadband strategy, which was successfully piloted during the COVID pandemic and secured a mayoral commitment of over \$150 million, the largest ever municipal allocation for broadband infrastructure of any U.S. city.

Director, Division of Broadband Access, Empire State Development Joshua Breitbart said, "It is an honor to serve New Yorkers at this critical moment in the funding and deployment of equitable broadband. Our ongoing outreach to Affordable Connectivity Program subscribers is a great example of how a partnership among federal programs, state agencies, private industry,

and local partners can work together to transform digital infrastructure across the state in the years ahead."

The ConnectAll initiative aims to ensure accessible, affordable, and reliable broadband for all New Yorkers and that New York will lead the 21st-century connected economy. In addition to expanding access and reducing costs for consumers through capital investments, Governor Hochul's pioneering ConnectALL initiative aims to ensure that every eligible New Yorker participates in the Affordable Connectivity Program and is equipped with the information and support needed to enroll.

Broadband costs New Yorkers more than \$60 a month on average. A report from the Department of Public Service showed that counties with lower household incomes tend to face the highest prices for service and have the fewest options. In addition to the \$30 a month assistance, financially eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if the consumer contributes more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.

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