



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

For Immediate Distribution | July 17, 2020 | (512) 463-1826

Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick, Speaker Bonnen, Senate Finance, House Appropriations Committee Chairs Announce eLearning Funding For Texas Students

AUSTIN -Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, House Speaker Dennis Bonnen, Senate Finance Committee Chair Jane Nelson, Vice Chair Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, and House Appropriations Committee Chair Giovanni Capriglione and Vice Chair Oscar Longoria today announced that the State of Texas will allocate \$200 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the purchase of eLearning devices and home internet solutions to enable remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic for Texas students that lack connectivity.

With this funding, the TEA will purchase and distribute devices, hotspots, routers, and more based on specific needs identified by local education agencies (LEAs). The funding would be used to establish a reimbursement program with a matching fund component tied to locally controlled Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) or LEA local funding. This funding is in addition to a previously announced distribution of up to \$400 million of CRF to reimburse districts for COVID-19 expenses incurred during the 2019-2020 school year. This funding will also establish a reimbursement program for devices and home internet costs incurred by LEAs from May 21st through September 1st.

"As school districts delay the start of in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19, it is essential that we work to provide Texas students with the devices they need to connect and communicate online for classroom instruction," said Governor Abbott. "As we continue to combat COVID-19 in Texas, we are committed to providing reliable and effective solutions that will help students academically succeed while protecting public health."

"While getting our students back to school is our top priority, many local districts are also developing a variety of virtual learning plans to ensure that students do not lose valuable learning time as we continue to fight COVID-19. This funding is an essential step in closing the digital gap for students by making access to technology available to every child who

needs it," said Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick.

"The onset of COVID-19 has yielded unprecedented educational challenges in the State of Texas, and the embrace of new technologies and virtual learning methods will be instrumental in our effort to provide quality instructional continuity for all students. This funding will go a long way to close existing technology gaps and improve connectivity statewide, and in doing so, our students will be equipped with the tools needed for success in the upcoming school year," said Speaker Dennis Bonnen.

"Virtual learning works when students have access to the proper wi-fi and electronic devices. These funds help bridge the digital divide and prevent students who lack access to technology from falling behind," said Senator Jane Nelson.

"No child should ever be denied the ability to achieve his/her dreams simply because he/she does not have technological devices or internet access. Education is the great equalizer and while that will look different in the near term, a move to distance learning to protect students and teachers can only be effective for all learners if they all are able to actively learn and participate. Today's actions by the Governor and TEA will move us toward this goal of ensuring every child has equal access to the tools and resources necessary to achieve a high-quality education," said Senator Juan Hinojosa.

"So many of our students across Texas will be starting the school year by continuing their remote education. With all of the challenges that remote learning presents, having adequate access to a computer and reliable internet shouldn't be one of them. "I'm proud to have worked with Governor Abbott, my legislative colleagues, and Commissioner Mike Morath to secure the needed funds to begin the process of bridging this digital divide," said Representative Giovanni Capriglione.

"Our public education system is facing unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19. Operation Connectivity ensures all Texas students have the resources needed to connect and learn online," said Representative Oscar Longoria.

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