

**Resolution Recommending Legislation For Expansion of Affordable, Quality Broadband in Wisconsin and For District Broadband Access Funding To Ensure Equity In Student Learning**

Whereas some Wisconsin students lack broadband access due to affordability; and

Whereas some Wisconsin students lack broadband access due to insufficient or unreliable quality; and

Whereas some Wisconsin school districts are unable to provide WiFi cards or hotspots to students; and

Whereas reliable, accessible broadband is a necessary tool as part of a strong public education; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the crucial need for affordable, working broadband access for all students and teachers; and

Whereas students without broadband access will be left behind their peers; and

Whereas the Wisconsin Supreme Court has determined that the equal opportunity to education as defined by art. X, sec. 3 of the Wisconsin State Constitution is a fundamental right;<sup>1</sup> and

Whereas a lack of broadband access denies students an equal opportunity to education in mandated virtual learning; and

Whereas lack of broadband access generally results in an inequitable public education for socioeconomically disadvantaged students or for students in rural Wisconsin without access;

Now therefore BE IT RESOLVED:

- 1) the WASB supports legislation to expand affordable, quality broadband access for all Wisconsin communities;
- 2) the WASB supports funding for school districts to ensure broadband access for students and staff; and
- 3) the WASB supports efforts of Governor Evers' Task Force on Broadband Access and others working to advise the governor and Wisconsin State Legislature on broadband actions and policy and initiatives for digital inclusion.

<sup>1</sup>Kukor v. Grover, 148 Wis. 2d 469, 496 (1989); see also Vincent v. Voigt, 236 Wis. 2d 588, 600-601, (2000), holding that "[a]n equal opportunity for a sound basic education is one that will equip students for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally. [This includes] the opportunity for students to be proficient in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography, and history, and for them to receive instruction in the arts and music, vocational training, social sciences, health, physical education and foreign language... So long as the legislature is providing sufficient resources so that school districts offer students the equal opportunity for a sound basic education as required by the constitution, the state school finance system will pass constitutional muster."

## Rationale:

Students and teachers need working internet to complete their work, especially in a mandated virtual learning environment. Barriers exist, such as lack of affordability or lack of reliable, working internet. This results in an unequal educational opportunity in situations of mandated virtual learning and it results in student inequity generally. Working, affordable broadband is a necessary tool for education and the Wisconsin State Legislature must take steps to remedy the inequity some Wisconsin students currently face.

The Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association released survey data in June 2020 finding that 64% of school districts report that parts of their districts are without access to broadband or cellular networks. The survey also found that 37% of districts were unable to provide WiFi cards or hotspots to their students. See [http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler\\_docs/files/062220wemtafs.pdf](http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/062220wemtafs.pdf)