

MPS Foundation: Announces #ConnectMilwaukee to help bridge the digital divide

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\$1 Million Fundraising Effort to Provide Thousands of MPS Families with Internet Access

MILWAUKEE, WI (June 3, 2020) — The global pandemic and our country's current unrest are shining long overdue spotlights on Milwaukee's inequities. We all now realize that the internet provides vital connection to family, services, housing, employment, and education. While most students and families in Wisconsin have access to online learning, thousands of MPS students are missing a critical component: internet access. The digital divide in our city has recently been exasperated and the MPS Foundation is stepping up to help.

To begin solving this problem, the MPS Foundation is announcing Phase 1 of a new campaign called #ConnectMilwaukee: raising \$1 million to provide internet connectivity for continuous remote learning. This campaign matches the investment already made by the Milwaukee Public Schools District and will allow them to purchase the volume necessary to receive discounts in order to ensure all student's needs are met. Our campaign will be additive to, and not in lieu of, MPS's allocations. \$2 million in total funds will secure mobile internet connectivity for 5,000+ students for 12+ months.

Visit mpsfdn.com to learn more about this new initiative and to donate.

The first phase of the campaign will focus on MPS's 5,000+ homeless student population and other families that do not have access to the internet. The second phase is working with the MPS school district and over 100 individual school communities to identify evolving needs for online learning including teacher technology education and training, technological enablement grants, and community technology usage support.

"Internet connectivity for our students has been inequitable and unequal. While a large number of us have transitioned to working from home or helping our family members navigate online learning, many parents and families cannot make this shift as easily," said Wendell Willis, Executive Director, MPS Foundation. "For those of you sitting at home wondering how you can help, this is the moment. This is your opportunity to directly serve the underserved. Internet access and bridging the digital divide is vital for everyone's routine daily tasks and we are committed to helping our students have the access they deserve."

Devices and connectivity onboarding will be conducted by the schools who are most knowledgeable about students' needs.

The MPS Foundation recognizes that in order for students to succeed academically, their basic household needs must be met. At this time of uncertainty, the Foundation has pivoted their fundraising and with community support, has rallied to ensure that MPS students, families and staff have access to the things they need now.

This new effort does not mean MPS Foundation will be stopping previous core efforts. Throughout the course of 2020, the Foundation will continue to support a variety of MPS projects and student needs and looks forward to joining forces with the community to enhance its impact for 78,000 students in Milwaukee Public Schools.