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*** *PRESS RELEASE* ***

Mayor Fulop and JC Housing Authority Maximize FCC Program to Bridge Digital Divide

Increasing Critical Internet Access by Decreasing Costs for Most Vulnerable Residents

JERSEY CITY – **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** and the **Jersey City Housing Authority (JCHA)** announced today the joint effort to support digital inclusion with the local outreach launch for the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a new Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program. Enrollment is now open for the benefit, which helps lower the cost of broadband service for eligible households during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. All JCHA residents are eligible for the program – nearly two-thirds of whom currently lack Wi-Fi access.

The $3.2 billion federal Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program provides a temporary subsidy of up to $50 per month toward broadband service for eligible households, and up to $100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. Jersey City officials are proactively targeting low-income and JCHA residents to help build consumer awareness.

"Now more than ever before, digital access is a central part of everyday life; however, low-income urban communities have disproportionately limited internet access and often suffer compounding effects," said **Mayor Steven Fulop**. "Everyone deserves equal access to opportunity regardless of income level, and this program will help close the digital divide to ensure kids can do their schoolwork, residents can improve income potential, and families can utilize telehealth services, among many other enhanced economic and social opportunities."

Since many of those who are eligible for the EBB program lack internet access, the City and JCHA are rolling out a multi-faceted outreach campaign to ensure all households citywide are informed and have support to enroll. To promote this opportunity, free computer stations with internet access are now available inside City Hall (280 Grove Street) and the City Hall Annex (4 Jackson Square along MLK Boulevard), with trained City employees on hand to assist with the application process.

To make an appointment for these services, residents can contact the Resident Response Center by phone at 201-547-4900. Walk-ins are also welcome at both locations during normal business hours.

"Nationally, only one-third of public housing residents have internet access at home, and most of those households have only a cell phone to go online with," said **Vivian Brady-Phillips, Executive Director of the**

Jersey City Housing Authority. "We are partnering with community and faith-based organizations citywide that already work directly with eligible populations to build consumer awareness about the FCC program and maximize this opportunity for low-income households - some of the most isolated during the pandemic."

The JCHA is also leveraging local community partnerships that already work with vulnerable populations to inform eligible residents and assist with the application process.

A household is eligible for the EBB program if one member meets at least *one* of the criteria below:
- Has an income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. .
- Participates in certain assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, Public Housing Assistance, Veterans Pension Benefit, or Lifeline.
- Approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program.
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year.
- Experienced a substantial loss of income through job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020.
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

Emergency Broadband Benefit enrollment is now open. Eligible households can enroll through a participating broadband provider or directly with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) using an online or mail-in application.

Additional information about the Emergency Broadband Benefit and eligibility requirements is available at fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, or by calling 833-511-0311 weekdays between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.

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