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EMBARGO UNTIL NOON ET / 9AM PT ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

GOVERNOR PAT MCCRORY TAKING ACTION TO CONNECT ALL NORTH CAROLINA STUDENTS TO HIGH-SPEED INTERNET FOR DIGITAL LEARNING

EducationSuperHighway Releases First Annual State of the States Report on School Broadband Connectivity

SAN FRANCISCO – November 19, 2015 – Today, [EducationSuperHighway](#), the national non-profit dedicated to upgrading the Internet access in every public school classroom in America, released the first annual *State of the States* report on K-12 broadband connectivity. The data and insights in the report unveil a comprehensive state by state review of broadband challenges and opportunities for K-12 public schools across the country.

In North Carolina, 44 percent of school districts are meeting the Federal Communications Commission's 100 kbps/student goal for digital learning readiness. However, thanks to the North Carolina School Connectivity Initiative, all school districts are currently receiving sufficient bandwidth to meet their digital learning needs. This is a result of a sophisticated and cost effective approach to bandwidth procurement that monitors and upgrades district broadband connections whenever actual usage consistently exceeds 60% of contracted capacity.

We commend Governor Pat McCrory for his leadership and action to ensure access for all North Carolina students. In 2015 his administration led the nation's largest K-12 Wi-Fi procurement, significantly lowering equipment costs and thereby enabling 95% of participating districts to place a Wi-Fi access point in every classroom.

Governor McCrory recognizes the importance of broadband connectivity and is taking strides to ensure students all across the state have access to digital learning as they do in Gaston County Schools where, for a recent lesson on prepositions, a teacher gathered a digital collection of content-specific videos, games, and examples on the Blendspace platform. Students were able to pick and choose their preferred method to learn the same concept, and overall class-wide proficiency increased by 20 points through just one personalized lesson.

To finish the job and connect all students to these opportunities, the Governor must continue his support for the North Carolina School Connectivity Initiative and enable all districts to grow their connectivity to 100 kbps/student and beyond. A typical district in North Carolina will need to grow bandwidth at least threefold to meet expected increase in demand by 2018.

"Digital learning has the power to transform education in this country, but that can't happen without first connecting all of our students to high-speed Internet. By working together to put a broadband foundation in place, we can ensure that every student, in every state, has equal opportunity for a world-class education," said Evan Marwell, CEO of EducationSuperHighway.

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In 2013, EducationSuperHighway reported that only 30 percent of school districts nationwide were meeting the FCC minimum Internet Access goal of 100 kbps per student, leaving 40 million students without the broadband they needed for digital learning. Since then, an additional \$2.5 billion per year in broadband funding from the FCC and extensive work by EducationSuperHighway, governors, school districts, state-level officials, service providers, and other partners has led to an additional 20 million students getting connected.

Despite this tremendous progress across the country, EducationSuperHighway's report finds that 23 percent of school districts nationwide are still not meeting the minimum Internet access goal, leaving 21 million students without the connectivity they need for digital learning.

As the *2015 State of the States* report shows, many states have made great progress toward ensuring every classroom has equal access to broadband. The gains that have been made in the last two years have been driven in part by dramatic improvements in the affordability of broadband, lowering the median cost of Internet access from \$22 per Mbps to \$11 per Mbps. To finish the job and prepare for the future, EducationSuperHighway is calling for governors in every state to take action:

- **Provide every school with access to fiber.** To meet federal connectivity goals, 92 percent of schools will need a fiber optic connection. Over the next three years, the E-rate program can provide the estimated \$1 billion it will cost to connect the schools currently without access to fiber.
- **Make bandwidth affordable.** A continued focus on affordability, with a goal of lowering the cost of Internet access to \$3 per Mbps, can enable another 12 million students across the country to utilize technology in the classroom.
- **Provide every classroom with robust Wi-Fi.** With over \$3 billion of funding for Wi-Fi connections available over the next 4 years, every school district should be able to upgrade their Wi-Fi to enable one to one digital learning in their classrooms.

Momentum is strong and with the federal resources in place and state-level commitments such as Governor McCrory's, North Carolina's schools can meet and surpass connectivity goals, bringing 21st century learning opportunities to every student in North Carolina.

About EducationSuperHighway

EducationSuperHighway is the leading non-profit focused on upgrading the Internet access in every public school classroom in America. We believe that digital learning has the potential to provide all students with equal access to educational opportunity and that every school requires high-speed broadband to make that opportunity a reality.

EducationSuperHighway's data-driven programs accelerate upgrades in America's schools. We help governors develop strategies to upgrade their schools, get fiber to schools that need it, and make broadband more affordable for school districts. Our work served as a catalyst for the modernization of

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the Federal Communications Commission's \$3.9 billion E-rate program, earning our CEO the 2015 Visionary of the Year award from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. For additional information, please visit <http://www.educationsuperhighway.org/>.

About the North Carolina School Connectivity Initiative

The North Carolina School Connectivity Initiative is supporting North Carolina's K-12 transition to digital learning by providing the bandwidth required to meet the growing Internet access demands of all students. North Carolina takes advantage of MCNC's Research and Education Network (NCREN) to ensure that all schools have access to Tier 1 Internet bandwidth. The NCREN backbone enables North Carolina to pay some of the lowest prices in the country for Internet bandwidth by leveraging zero cost connections to major content providers like Google, Time Warner Cable and Internet2 that handle more than half of the state's K-12 Internet traffic. In addition, the backbone significantly enhances performance by leveraging the Akamai content distribution network.

The North Carolina School Connectivity Initiative also ensures that districts have the Internet bandwidth they need without wasting resources by over-buying. School district bandwidth usage is monitored daily and districts receive additional bandwidth when actual usage consistently exceeds 60% of contracted capacity. This approach also ensures that the North Carolina School Connectivity Initiative can take advantage of declines in Internet access and transport prices.

The North Carolina School Connectivity Initiative was initially funded by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2007. It maintains a highly reliable and robust infrastructure and has accommodated exponential growth in usage, all with a flat budget. In 2015, North Carolina led the nation's largest statewide procurement of internal school infrastructure as part of the FCC's modernized E-rate program. On the heels of the \$42M infrastructure procurement, the NC General Assembly appropriated an additional \$12M in annual funding for school connectivity to support and sustain internal school wireless and wired connectivity. Governor Pat McCrory, the Lieutenant Governor, the North Carolina State Board of Education, and the General Assembly, with leadership from Representative Craig Horn, led the way in securing this critical funding.