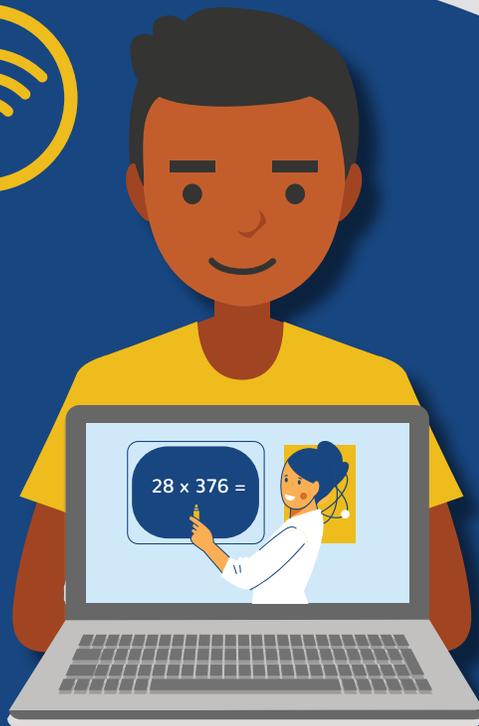


OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN:

BRIDGING MARYLAND'S DIGITAL DIVIDE



Prince George's County
PGCEA
Educators' Association

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EDUCATION FOR ALL OF MARYLAND'S STUDENTS

The Prince George's County Educators' Association (PGCEA) is calling on elected officials to act, and internet companies to provide free access for all educators and students during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the harsh opportunity gap between students and educators in wealthy school districts and those in less advantaged communities. For many in less advantaged districts, access to the internet is a luxury they cannot afford.

The Opportunity to Learn campaign is aimed at holding the government and corporations – specifically Comcast and Verizon – accountable for ensuring that the internet and other resources necessary for successful e-learning are made available to all students and educators at no cost.

Without this necessary resource, students in Prince George's County are being forced to access public wifi networks from cars, and attempt to do work on their phones and in school parking lots on the school's network. These are not acceptable solutions.

The Digital Divide

[According to Broadband Now](#), internet availability across Maryland varies county by county, and access is limited. Nearly 40% of Marylanders do not have access to fiber-optic service and nearly one-quarter of residents lack access to DSL service. But even for those who can access an internet connection in some fashion, the price remains a barrier. Nearly 35% of Maryland's population does not have access to affordable internet plans.

The Opportunity Gap

In January 2020, after three years of data gathering, the [Maryland Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education](#) released a study that illustrated the existing opportunity gap in schools, making specific note communities with high rates of poverty do not receive sufficient resources. Schools have consistently faced an opportunity gap widened by technology disparities, but have sought to balance the playing field for students by providing access to internet and computers on-site at school facilities. Now that these facilities are closed, many students are not receiving the quality education they deserve – and some are receiving no education at all, in the case of students without reliable connectedness.

Why Comcast and Verizon?

Opportunity to Learn is calling on Comcast and Verizon to provide students and educators access to free internet immediately because these corporations have the ability and capacity. In 2019, total Verizon Business revenues were \$31.4 billion. Verizon also has a long-standing and well-documented history of paying “less than zero” taxes despite its billions in profits. Comcast profits during that same time period topped \$109 billion, an increase of 15.3% from the year before. In 2019, Comcast only paid \$3.673 billion in taxes -- an amount equal to 3.3% of their profits.

Comcast

Year	Annual Income Taxes	Annual Revenue
2015	\$4,959	\$74,510
2016	\$5,298	\$80,736
2017	\$-7,569	\$85,029
2018	\$3,380	\$94,507
2019	\$3,673	\$108,942

All figures = Millions of U.S. \$

Verizon

Year	Annual Income Taxes	Annual Revenue
2015	\$9,865	\$131,620
2016	\$7,378	\$125,980
2017	\$-9,956	\$126,034
2018	\$3,584	\$130,863
2019	\$2,945	\$131,868

All figures = Millions of U.S. \$