

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Emily Murphy
Administrator
General Services Administration (GSA)
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Administrator Murphy:

We write to respectfully encourage the Administration to amend Executive Order 12999 (EO 12999) and allow the General Services Administration (GSA) to distribute used information technology (IT) assets to certified domestic recyclers. Allowing surplus equipment to be sourced from federal government agencies and refurbished by certified electronics recyclers in the United States would ensure that students are able to continue their education through distance learning.

As school districts across the nation transition their classrooms to remote learning, many students in low-income households lack the technology and broadband connection necessary to continue their education. This problem is particularly pervasive in rural communities which creates a homework gap that deprives many students of enriching educational opportunities. While Congress has appropriated money specifically for this purpose in the CARES Act, we encourage the GSA to identify innovative measures that can source used computer equipment for refurbishment purposes and get it into the hands of students who are in need.

America's electronics refurbishment and recycling companies play a vital role in closing the distance learning gap by providing used-but-still-useful technology sourced from corporations upgrading to new hardware. This quality refurbished equipment typically supplements constrained supplies of new equipment. However, the COVID-19 crisis has depleted the domestic market of urgently needed equipment, exacerbated by skyrocketing demand and factory closures in Asia.

While electronics recycling companies typically access used equipment from companies as they upgrade to new equipment, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed the global economy, leaving few companies that are investing in new hardware. Surplus equipment from federal government agencies can help fill this gap and ensure more students and public schools get the equipment they need. However, under Executive Order 12999 which was issued by President Clinton in 1996, used federal assets can only be distributed to nonprofit organizations for refurbishment and distribution to schools.

While we certainly support the efforts of the nonprofits engaged in refurbishing this material, we are concerned that this policy limits access to available equipment. Particularly in our current environment, we feel strongly that we should make it as easy as possible for students and public schools to access the equipment necessary to support comprehensive learning at home.

We encourage GSA to consider amending Executive Order 12999 to allow certified recyclers to source and refurbish this equipment, should there be equipment beyond what nonprofit organizations are able to process. Furthermore, should GSA pursue this initiative, it would be prudent to engage directly with electronic recycling companies in the United States that have technical expertise in refurbishing equipment for second use and work in coordination to ensure that these refurbished electronics are affordable.

Thank you for your attention to this request and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Congresswoman Ann McLane Kuster



Congressman Steve Stivers



Congressman Chris Pappas



Congressman C.A.Dutch Ruppertsberger