



**CHICAGO – APRIL 1, 2021** – TLN Distribution Partner Comcast Commits to Investing \$1 Billion Over Next 10 Years to Reach 50 Million Low-Income Americans with Tools and Resources to Success in Digital World

*Comcast’s Internet Essentials Program Has Now Connected More Than 10 Million People Over the Past 10 Years, including 880,000 in Cook County Alone*

On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Internet Essentials program, Comcast today announced it would invest \$1 billion over the next 10 years to help further close the digital divide and give even more low-income Americans the tools and resources they need to succeed in an increasingly digital world. The announcement coincides with the release of a 10-year Progress Report showing that, since 2011, the company, working in collaboration with its network of thousands of nonprofit partners, has connected a cumulative total of more than 10 million people in America – including around 880,000 in Cook County alone – to broadband Internet at home, the overwhelming majority of whom were not connected prior to signing up. Cook County is the number one county in the nation for cumulative connects.

Comcast’s \$1 billion commitment will include investments in a number of critical areas, including: additional support for its ongoing Lift Zone initiative, which establishes WiFi-connected safe spaces in 1,000+ community centers nationwide for students and adults by the end of 2021; new laptop and computer donations; grants for nonprofit community organizations to create opportunities for low-income Americans, particularly in media, technology and entrepreneurship; and continued investment in the company’s landmark Internet Essentials program. It is estimated that these new commitments will impact as many as 50 million Americans over the next 10 years. In 2021 alone, Comcast estimates students will be able to complete more than 25 million hours of remote learning lessons to further address the “homework gap” at the hundreds of Lift Zone locations that have already opened or will open soon.

“In a way, Chicago is Internet Essentials’ ‘hometown.’ A lot of program innovations and enhancements were first advanced here, ranging from the establishment of [Experience Labs](#) in several Chicago Public Library branches to the [Chicago Connected](#) initiative,” said Matthew Summy, Comcast’s Regional Vice President of External and Government Affairs. “I’m proud of the work we’ve done alongside so many community-based organizations and other partners since the program started to help hundreds of thousands of Chicago and Cook County families connect to the Internet at home, many for the first time.”

TLN President/CEO Debra Fraser commented, “We’ve appreciated our 20+ year relationship with Comcast and especially their commitment to their communities – a value we at TLN strongly share. We know that many of our viewers, partners and even some employees have benefitted from Comcast’s Internet Essentials and now more, particularly those negatively affected by the pandemic, will have access to this beneficial program.”

In addition to capturing the total number of connections Internet Essentials has provided, the 10-Year Progress Report also highlights other key metrics about the program, including having:

- Increased the program's Internet speeds six times, from 1.5 Mbps in 2011 to 50 Mbps today, without ever increasing the price of the program, which has remained \$9.95/month.
- Launched its Lift Zones program, which aims to connect more than 1,000 community centers with free WiFi by the end of 2021. Comcast already has established more than 20 [Lift Zones](#) in its Greater Chicago Region and has plans for many more.
- Developed an Internet Essentials Partnership Program (IEPP) that has signed up hundreds of schools, school districts and other organizations that have come together to help connect tens of thousands of students to the Internet during the COVID-19 pandemic. Comcast partnered with Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and Chicago Public Schools on the [Chicago Connected](#) program, the largest IEPP in the company's footprint. Comcast also partnered with the [Housing Authority of Cook County](#) to connect public housing residents across the county. All told, Comcast has established 65 IEPPs with school districts and other partners in the region.
- Offered 60 days of free Internet service to any new Internet Essentials customer who needed to get online during the coronavirus outbreak.
- Expanded the number of languages our Internet Essentials call center agents can speak to more than 240, plus American Sign Language, to help ensure we break down language barriers that can prevent people from applying or getting online.
- Built up an online learning center that includes more than 200 digital literacy training videos, guides, and reports that are free to anyone to use, including non-customers.
- Developed an employee network of 3,000 Internet Essentials Ambassadors who volunteer their time to help spread the word about the program in their communities.

This new commitment comes on the heels of a series of initiatives announced during the COVID-19 pandemic that reinforced the company's commitment to addressing the digital divide and the homework gap by upping speeds to 50 Mbps downstream without changing the program's \$9.95/month price. The company also continues to offer 60 days of free Internet service to new Internet Essentials customers who sign up before June 30, 2021.

### **About Internet Essentials**

Internet Essentials is Comcast's signature digital equity initiative and the nation's largest and most comprehensive broadband adoption program. In 10 years, it has helped connect 10 million low-income Americans to broadband Internet at home, most for the very first time. Internet Essentials has a comprehensive design that addresses each of the three major barriers to broadband adoption. This includes: multiple options to access free digital literacy training in print, online, and in person; the option to purchase a heavily subsidized, low-cost Internet-ready computer; and low-cost, high-speed Internet service for \$9.95 a month, plus tax. The program is structured as a partnership between Comcast and tens of thousands of school districts, libraries, elected officials, and nonprofit community partners. Comcast has never raised the price of the program. For more information about Internet Essentials and Comcast's commitment to education and digital equity, please visit <https://corporate.comcast.com/education>. To apply, visit [www.internetessentials.com](http://www.internetessentials.com) or call 1-855-846-8376 for English or 1-855-765-6995 for Spanish.

## About TLN

The Total Living Network launched as WCFC TV38 in 1976 with Mayor Richard J. Daley presiding as guest speaker at the McCormick Place dedication. Over its forty-plus years of operation, TLN has produced original programming serving the Chicagoland faith community and received numerous Midwest Emmy awards. TLN can be viewed in the greater Chicago region on cable exclusively on XFINITY basic channel 138.

Contact: Shirley Hill

Tel.: (630) 801-3646

Email: [shill@tln.com](mailto:shill@tln.com)

Website: [TLN.com](http://TLN.com)