



Bruce Harrell
Seattle City Councilmember

April 25, 2011

The Honorable Mike McGinn
Office of the Mayor
600 Fourth Avenue, 7th Floor
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

The Honorable Richard Conlin
President
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Dear Mayor McGinn and Council President Conlin:

Re: The Great Student Initiative

Per my earlier announcements and discussions of the topic, I am pleased to introduce the attached proposed Resolution that would launch the Great Student Initiative, a new partnership program with information, communication and technology companies, and financial institutions to provide low-cost, high-speed Internet access, hardware and software for low-income students in the Seattle Public Schools, and creating a steering committee to advance the goals of the initiative. In the last 18 months, I have worked closely with Comcast and Microsoft's Shape the Future Education program to build this public/private partnership to deliver technology access to our students. Now that the Families and Education Levy is moving forward, this technology initiative ties beautifully into our strategy of uplifting our children and eliminating the digital divide. In short, this initiative will allow the students in Seattle Public Schools who are eligible for the free lunch program according to federal standards (approximately 35% of 47,000), to obtain high-speed internet access at less than \$10.00 per month and be furnished with a computer that allows them connectivity. This will be furnished at no or minimal cost to the city of Seattle.

Based on the City of Seattle Information Technology Residential Survey from 2009, 84% of households with incomes above \$50,000 receive high-speed Internet, but only 46% of households with incomes under \$30,000 receive high-speed Internet. Additionally, only 41% of respondents with no high school degree had high-speed Internet compared to 93% for respondents with a college degree. When correlating the relationship between technology access and race/ethnicity, 80% of Caucasians had high-speed Internet, 73% for Asian Pacific Islanders, 59% for African Americans, and 38% for Hispanic/Latinos. Furthermore, English speaking households had a high-speed Internet adoption rate of 77% compared to 19% for Spanish speaking households.

Seattle is ranked as the third most wired American city in terms of broadband adoption, high-speed Internet access options, and wireless Internet hot spots. Nationally ranked as the city with the eighth highest number of technology jobs, and backyard institutions like Microsoft, Amazon, the Bill & Melinda

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Gates Foundation, and the University of Washington, we have a strategic advantage to compete to be the number one city in America that prepares its students for the new global economy.

According to the Washington State Employment Security Department, King County is projected to employ over 100,000 workers in computer and mathematical jobs by 2017, with an average annual growth rate of 2.7% between now and 2017. The United States Department of Labor projects more than 1,600,000 new IT jobs will be created in the United States by the year 2014. Eight of the nine fastest growing occupations by the year 2014 will be in the area of Information Technology. A Washington State Employment Security Department study confirms the 27% growth rate for our state as well, with some computer jobs posting growth rates of 6 % per year and higher. Between now and 2018, information technology jobs are projected to grow by 22 percent and account for 60 percent of the job growth, the fastest of all professional occupations. In King County, there are 233,000 technology jobs. On average, information technology jobs have a job multiplier of five to one.

It is imperative to equip all Seattle Public School students across all socioeconomic backgrounds with high-speed Internet, a quality computer, and software at home to compete and be successful in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. **Bottom line:** equipping our students with these technology tools will allow them to successfully compete for jobs. The future is a global economy driven by technology and information technology plays a vital role in driving the economy of our city, county, state and nation.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. Should you have questions, please contact me at 206-684-8804.

Sincerely,

Bruce A. Harrell

Seattle City Councilmember

Chair: Energy, Technology and Civil Rights Committee

206-684-8804

Bruce.Harrell@Seattle.Gov

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council
Bill Schrier, Department of Information Technology
Holly Miller, Office for Education
Julie Nelson, Office for Civil Rights
Citizens' Telecommunications and Technology Advisory Board

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