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Timeline for Providing Wi-Fi for Students in NYC Homeless Shelters “Unacceptable”

**City Bar President and City Council Education Committee
Chair Treyger Write to NYC Schools Chancellor**

While “heartened” to hear Mayor de Blasio announce that Wi-Fi access will be provided in homeless shelters housing school-aged children, “we find the reported timeline for this project unacceptable as many shelters may remain without Wi-Fi through the school year,” write New York City Bar Association President Sheila S. Boston and New York City Council Education Committee Chair Mark Treyger [in a joint letter](#) to NYC Department of Education Chancellor Richard A. Carranza.

The letter expresses “deep concerns about the lack of internet access in shelters for homeless students which prevents effective remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic” and cites experts’ predictions that students could lose seven to 11 months of learning under current conditions.

Approximately one-third of New York’s homeless students live in shelters, but according to a [report](#) by the City Bar Justice Center, only six percent of homeless residents surveyed had internet access through their homeless shelter.

“Even for those students who have received a cellular-enabled iPad, internet connectivity has been grossly unreliable and insufficient to sustain remote learning activities, which can involve accessing Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft, and YouTube. Multiple parents living in shelters reported having to rely on LinkNYC to connect their children to remote learning, while others said they rely on public Wi-Fi available through a library or restaurant such as McDonald’s,” the letter states.

Citing a recent New York Times [article](#) documenting how some operators of City shelters wired their own buildings within weeks and for a fraction of what the city is paying cable giants to do the job over nearly a year, the letter urges the City to think more creatively about how it can quickly get internet access into shelters.

The letter writers further express their disappointment that the City's plan does not include the provision of Wi-Fi in *all* shelters, which would enable residents to engage in GED, vocational, and college course work. "These endeavors are pathways out of homelessness. No student, young or old, should be deprived of the tools that will help lift them out of homelessness and poverty," the letter states.

This letter is the latest effort in the City Bar's [#Wifi4Homeless](#) campaign, which seeks to engage the public and partner organizations in raising awareness on the issue of lack of internet access and essential technology resources in New York City homeless shelters and urge the Mayor's Office to include and prioritize homeless shelters in their plan to expand broadband internet access for low-income New Yorkers. For more information on the #Wifi4Homeless campaign click [here](#).

The letter can be read here: <https://bit.ly/3cj6wyB>

About the Association

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