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Congress of the United States
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June 3, 2020

The Honorable Chad Rupe
Administrator
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utility Service
1400 Independence Ave, SW
STOP 1510, Rm 5135
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Rupe:

As your Department reviews applications for the FY2020 RUS-DLT Grant Program, I would like to express my strong support for Clinton College's distance learning application and hope they receive your full consideration for this award.

As you may know, rural poverty persists in many areas in South Carolina, particularly in my district. These economic hardships have been overwhelmingly exacerbated as a result of COVID-19, and as a result, we have seen all Americans come together to combat this pandemic in many ways. From the onset of the ongoing crisis, Clinton College, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), has committed to addressing the educational needs of their students whom reside in geographically disadvantaged areas across the district. Before COVID-19, students struggled to afford the climbing tuition rates associated with a postsecondary education, but now they are forced to balance economic adversities with the lack of internet access imperative to completing their assignments, and therefore their degrees.

Therefore, the necessity of efficient online platforms has never been more apparent. With increased interconnectivity among students and teachers, rural learners would be able to obtain the high-quality education they deserve while stimulating local economic growth. By implementing End User Sites for libraries, adult learning centers and churches, as well as utilizing technological support for audio and video equipment, Clinton College plans to address critical distance learning and telecommunication gaps for hundreds of students and educators living in rural South Carolina.

I believe this project epitomizes the objectives for distance learning Congress intended when appropriating CARES Act funding. Based on this Administration's emphasis on bolstering HBCUs, coupled with several of the reasons stated above, I strongly support Clinton College's application for \$500,000 to substantially improve distance learning for my constituents most in need.

Sincerely,



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress