



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 11, 2020

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**Home Broadband Is as Essential as Water and Electricity:
ULC Calls on Libraries to Act as Digital Equity Leaders**

A new Urban Libraries Council Leadership Brief provides action strategies for public libraries to advocate for digital equity through broadband in every household.

WASHINGTON – The Urban Libraries Council has published a new Leadership Brief on [*Digital Equity in the Age of COVID-19*](#). Informed by the work of ULC’s [*Digital Equity action team*](#), this resource frames digital equity as a social justice issue and challenges library leaders to take on a more transformational role in making sure every community resident, regardless of income, has home access to broadband internet – the fundamental tool needed to participate in education and the workplace.

Introducing the Leadership Brief is the following quote from Mayor McKinley Price of Newport News (Va.), “The coronavirus has really brought home the urgency of addressing the digital divide, particularly because of its impact on African Americans and other minorities who have been far more likely to lose their jobs, miss out on school’s online classes and fall ill. We need to work together to ensure that no one is left on the wrong side of the digital divide.” Mayor Price is the current President of the African American Mayors Association.

The ULC Leadership Brief offers action strategies, key messages and background information to empower library leaders to take on a more active and intentional role in advancing digital equity. It also includes highlights of how ULC member libraries in the U.S. and Canada are already moving the needle forward with this work.

“COVID-19 didn’t create the digital divide, but it’s made it all too clear that home broadband is as essential to 21st-century life as access to clean water and electricity,” said ULC President and CEO Susan Benton. “This increased awareness of the digital divide’s inseparable connection to social justice has created an opportunity for libraries and other community leaders to act on

digital equity. The *Digital Equity* ULC Leadership Brief is a critical tool to equip and energize libraries across North America as we take on this new leadership role.”

The ULC Digital Equity action team, which guided the creation of this resource, is one of six teams leading ULC’s [Going Forward from the Pandemic](#) Initiative. Launched in May 2020 by the ULC Executive Board, this initiative is an unprecedented collaborative effort by ULC’s entire member community to establish new models, techniques and approaches that can help all libraries lead their communities into a stronger post-pandemic future. In addition to Digital Equity, action team focus areas for this initiative include:

- Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses
- Partnering with Schools
- Race and Social Equity
- The Leaders Library Card Challenge
- Redefining the Library’s Role

Additional information about ULC’s [Going Forward from the Pandemic](#) Initiative, action teams and *Digital Equity in the Age of COVID-19* Leadership Brief can be found at urbanlibraries.org.

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About the Urban Libraries Council

The Urban Libraries Council is an innovation and action tank of North America’s leading public library systems. ULC drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships to elevate the power of libraries as essential, transformative institutions for the 21st century. More than 150 urban member libraries in the U.S. and Canada rely on ULC to identify significant challenges facing today’s communities and provide new tools and techniques to help libraries achieve stronger outcomes in education, digital equity, workforce and economic development, and race and social equity.