MOTION

Like electricity, having access to the internet has become a necessity for households. Before COVID-19, people without internet access relied on places like libraries and cafes for access to Wi-Fi. Currently, in response to COVID-19, the Central Library and the 72 branch libraries remain closed to the public until further notice, leaving many Angelenos without access to Wi-Fi. For low-income communities, having access to the internet is often too expensive and even more so now for Angelenos, who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19. In Council District 1, it is estimated that 40 percent of constituents do not have access to Wi-Fi.

As the global pandemic threatens another year of in-person schooling and people continue to work from home, access to the internet is now even more critical. To help bridge the gap, some school districts have distributed Wi-Fi hot spots and laptops to students. However, this has not been enough to meet the growing demand for Wi-Fi hot spots. Additionally, with more people transitioning to working from home, access to the internet is necessary for them to perform their work but challenging when they do not have access to it.

A recently released report by the Los Angeles Unified School District found that more than 50,000 Black and Latino middle and high school students in Los Angeles did not regularly participate in virtual classrooms after campuses closed in March. Although the report only measured engagement and did not analyze why certain groups of students were less likely to participate, a previous survey showed that one in five low-income students of color lacked computers and internet access. The City should find an effective way to bridge this gap.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Library Department be instructed to report back on the feasibility of implementing a pilot program in Council District 1, that uses the public library system to loan out Wi-Fi hot spots to help bridge the gap of internet access.

PRESENTED BY: _____

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