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Philadelphia remains the city with the highest level of poverty among the top 10 cities in the nation. It is estimated that more than 35% of residents lack Internet access because they cannot afford it. This lack of access negatively impacts their ability to apply for employment or gain information for training, education or social services. In the 21st Century, Internet access and connectivity has become an economic and social justice issue. That is why Drexel University is part of a citywide program -- called Keyspot -- along with more than 50 social service and community organizations formed to bridge the digital divide.

We maintain several mobile computer labs that are outfitted with Mobile Citizen hotspots. These labs are lent out to non-profit, civic, education and social service agencies for recruitment, registration, job applications, mental health and health surveys, etc. Agencies include the Free Library of Philadelphia, The City's Department of Mental Health, Philadelphia Returning Citizens Program (Ex-Offenders Program), after school programs, Philadelphia School Partnerships, among others. In 2014-2015, the labs served more than 7,500 residents with more than 62,000 hours of access which clearly translates into more than 6GB per month. These were mostly low-income people who would not have access to the Internet without the mobile labs.

Many of the mobile lab users are middle school students who participate in after school programs at community centers and churches. These are students who do not have a computer, let alone, Internet access at home.

We are continually grateful to Mobile Citizen for this critical service – the loss of which would negatively impact school children, as well as thousands of people living in poverty in Philadelphia. It will deny them access to important information for improving the quality of their lives and supporting a positive future.

In order to provide poor people with 21st Century skills and tools to combat poverty, they need fast, high-quality Internet access that starts when they are in school and is not restricted after 6GB. In a City that continues to battle high unemployment and poverty, unrestricted access to broadband in Philadelphia is one of the means to overcoming economic inequality.

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