October 7, 2019

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street SW

Washington, DC 20554

Review Committee:

My name is Cassandra Lindsey, and I am the Technology Coordinator for Cherokee County Schools located in Cherokee County, Alabama. Our school system is a rural, low socioeconomic school system with approximately 3,900 students. We have a high poverty rate with over 65% of our students qualifying for free or reduced lunches. Many of our students qualify for homeless services as they live with grandparents or other relatives who are not their parents. Poverty impacts our community in a profound way. The school system is working to actively engage our community because we know the only way to break the cycle of generational poverty in which many of our students are living is to build relationships and provide a quality education for our students. Several of our churches have organized programs to provide food for families on the evenings and weekends. Fundraisers for families in need are often occurring, which is a testament to how much the people in this community love one another, despite the economic challenges that are present.

Through the Federal Communications Commission, our small school system has been able to expand the opportunities for our students by creating and maintaining a reliable infrastructure and network. Internet access has changed the way our teachers teach and how students learn. We are able to prepare our students for careers and problem-solving in the modern world. Instead of just talking about a heart surgery in health classes, students are able to see an actual heart surgery being performed. Instead of only watching a robot on television, students are able to build robots and program them to complete tasks. Instead of just discounting students who are unable to read, we are more effectively about to diagnose their issues and provide solutions while we track their progress. All of this is made possible because of our internet access.

I started my career as a fourth grade teacher. I love teaching, and I love helping students reach their full potential. I realized after three years of teaching that I wanted to pursue a career in administration. I worked as an assistant principal for two years and was then promoted to Technology Coordinator. At the time, the network administrator had been here for fifteen years. He built our current network from the ground up and completed our E-Rate paperwork. As a teacher with an educational background, I knew very little about the technical side of how a network operates. I only worked with this network administrator for a year and a half before he left to pursue other opportunities. I learned some technical things during this time, but I was left to figure out how to run a network on my own. I reached out to other leaders and studied intently, but there is still so much to learn.

Additionally during this time, Alabama’s longtime E-Rate coordinator left his position. The position sat unfilled for a time. During this absence, I worked with a national consulting company to ensure that all of our forms were correctly filed. I mistakenly understood that once a Form 471 was funded for multiple years, the Form 471 did not have to be resubmitted each year to continue services. My former network administrator had completed the filing to fund our Wide Area Network, and I wrongly understood that nothing would have to be done with it for five years. I was working with the new state coordinator to learn more about the E-Rate process when she discovered I had missed this step. I immediately filed the Form 471 and am now writing this appeal in hopes that our WAN can still be considered for funding.

I am deeply burdened about missing the deadline. I do not want all of the progress our school system has made to be undone because of my misunderstanding. I want our students to continue to have top-notch educational experiences to prepare them for life after high school. I want our teachers to continue to have the resources they need to provide this quality education. Please consider funding this request for Cherokee County Schools. The funding amount requested on the Form 471 is $63,932.16.

United States Representative Mike Rogers, United States Representative Robert Aderholt, and United States Senator Richard Shelby have expressed their concerns to help us fulfill this need with funding from the E-Rate program. I have attached letters from these congressmen.

I am also including information below and have attached the Form 471 in the online form.

BEN: 128047

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Thank you so much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Lindsey

Technology Coordinator

Cherokee County Schools