

January 29, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **Ex Parte Communication**
Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries -- WC Docket No. 13-184
Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism -- CC Docket No. 02-6

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On January 17, 2018, John Wade, Chief Executive Officer of Alabama Supercomputer Authority (ASA), Cathy Cruzan, President of Funds For Learning, and I met with FCC staff to discuss the positive impact of E-rate funding for schools in Alabama. The following are the FCC Telecommunications Access Policy Division (TAPD) staff with whom we met: Ryan Palmer, Division Chief (TAPD), Elizabeth Drogula, Deputy Division Chief (TAPD), James Bachtell, Attorney Advisor (via telephone), and Mark Nadel, Attorney Advisor.

In additional meetings, John Wade, Cathy Cruzan and I met with Mark Stephens, Managing Director, and Cara Voth, Counsel, Office of the Managing director; with Jay Schwarz, Wireline Advisor to Chairman Pai; and with Travis Litman, Commissioner Rosenworcel's Chief of Staff and Senior Legal Advisor.

John Wade and Cathy Cruzan also met with Amy Bender, Legal Advisor for Commissioner O'Rielly, and Claude Aiken, Legal Advisor for Commissioner Clyburn.

In these meetings, Mr. Wade shared that ASA prepares and submits an E-rate consortium application on behalf of 137 of the 141 school districts in the state of Alabama. This represents approximately 750,000 students at more than 1,500 school sites. Mr. Wade described the process by which each data circuit across the state is competitively bid, and the resulting price effectiveness of the network. He explained that by 2020 the overall bandwidth needs of the consortium are anticipated to have increased by a factor of 1,335% from year 2012, while spending will have only increased by 25%. Importantly, Mr. Wade noted, this dramatic savings (13.35X more bandwidth for 1.25X the cost) has not come at the cost of network reliability. Instead, the current statewide network enjoys an annual uptime of 99%.

Mr. Wade went on to explain that the FCC's consortium application process has reduced the burden placed on individual school districts for submitting an E-rate application. The net effect of all this has been more bandwidth, with increased reliability, at a lower cost, and with reduced administrative burden for individual school districts.

Mr. Wade also described the challenges associated with delays in E-rate funding payments and funding commitments and his hope that the pace of USAC's processing of E-rate paperwork would increase soon. While school districts are not impacted themselves by these delays, it is a challenge for the consortium to cover Internet access for extended periods of time. For example, he explained, there has yet to be a funding disbursement for the funding year 2016 funding requests which were submitted in 2016 and funded a year later in 2017.

Finally, Mr. Wade described the need for clarification regarding ownership of self-provisioned networks. If the demand for bandwidth in Alabama schools continues to increase at its current rate, the consortium may consider self-provisioned fiber optics for portions of its middle mile network. This has the potential to further increase bandwidth while lowering costs per gigabit even further.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ John D. Harrington

John D. Harrington

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Attachment: Alabama Supercomputer Authority Network Diagram
Alabama Supercomputer Authority Service Cost and Network Growth Comparison

cc: Mark Stephens
Jay Schwarz
Claude Aiken
Amy Bender
Travis Litman
Ryan Palmer
Elizabeth Drogula

January 17, 2018



Alabama Supercomputer Authority

Internet and Technology for Education



