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Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington, DC 20554

October 16, 2017

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing today in response to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice which, among other things, considers changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program and for the critical programmatic and policy changes the commission adopted in 2014. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

The Rochester City School District is a high needs district and we have one of highest child poverty rates in the country. Federally funded programs such as E-Rate are absolutely necessary to help educate our students and to bridge the "digital divide" that exists today in impoverished communities like ours.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this public notice, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

E-Rate played a critical role is the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband. The E-Rate's investment in Category 2 Wi-Fi and internal connections funding is extremely valuable and could not be replaced by school, district or state funds.

It is absolutely imperative for a district our size to have a multi-year, well-conceived technology plan. In our 5 year plan, we will be using Category 2 funding to greatly improve the wireless in our High Schools. This translates in to over 12,000 students receiving the fastest speeds and most reliable connectivity that is apparent today in many affluent suburban school districts and industry. Without this funding, a gap will exist and potentially contributing to our planned upward trajectory for student achievement.

In closing, I reiterate my district's continued, strong support for and reliance upon the E-Rate program for being able to access and afford the high-speed connectivity that is so central to our students' learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Annmarie Lehner, CIO