



# DONNA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

*"Be the Change"*

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

October 20, 2017

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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 Donna ISD to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

Donna ISD is an extremely low-wealth, socio economically challenged school district comprised of approximately 15,000 students spread over 20 campuses, 14 elementary and 7 secondary, in the lower southwestern Tip of Texas. Donna ISD averages over 95% eligibility for free or reduced lunch. Our district has a strong need for technology resources and depends on E-Rate funding to provide the infrastructure

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.

Donna ISD plans to use category 2 funds for the following:  
Upgrade Donna North High School (cabling and Network Equipment)  
Upgrade 3-D Academy ( cabling and Network Equipment)  
Sans Servers – Storage  
Upgrade Wi-Fi infrastructure in 2019  
Upgrade Network Operating Center in 2019

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,

Fernando Castillo, DSD Superintendent