

Southwest Georgia Regional Library System

Headquarters Library
301 S. Monroe Street
Bainbridge, Georgia 39819

Susan S. Whittle
Director

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

Dear Chairman Pai,

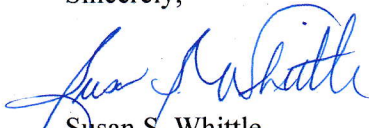
We are pleased to be able to provide input on the impact of having access to secure and sufficient funding for our library WiFi and internal connections. Before the E-rate Modernization in 2014, virtually no libraries received funds for then Priority 2 services. Unless we were at a 90% discount rate, we could assume there would be no funding left after all requests for internet access were funded. USAC data shows that most libraries are eligible for a 70% discount or less according to the American Library Association, many libraries stopped bothering to apply for WiFi funding. Some states have reported that none of their libraries have received WiFi funds since the beginning of the E-Rate program.

In communities across the country, people turn to the library to use our WiFi on their tablets, laptops, and other devices. When comparing our wireless use from Fiscal Year 2014 to Fiscal Year 2017, our WiFi usage has increased 196%. Library users are downloading job applications, applying for financial aid, seeking health information, and communicating with family – all dependent on a strong WiFi signal. Increasingly, libraries also provide services that depend on WiFi, including STEM activities such as our Coding and Minecraft Clubs for K12 youth. Libraries everywhere know WiFi through the library is not a “nice to have” – it’s a core community service.

With the commitment of the FCC to ensure a library budget of \$2.30 (\$5.00 for a selected category of larger urban and suburban libraries) per square foot, libraries can finally upgrade outdated equipment or plan for new construction. They have confidence that desperately needed support will be there.

Please maintain secure funding through the full five year budget period as adopted during the 2014 Modernization. Our communities depend on that funding.

Sincerely,



Susan S. Whittle
Executive Director



Catherine Vanstone
Asst. Director for Technology, Training, and Development

SW/cv

☐ Decatur County - Gilbert H. Gragg Library
301 S. Monroe Street
Bainbridge, GA 39819
(229) 248-2665

☐ James W. Merritt, Jr. Memorial Library
259 E. Main Street
Colquitt, GA 39837
(229) 758-3131
Web Site: www.swgri.org

☐ Seminole County Public Library
103 W. 4th Street
Donalsonville, GA 39845
(229) 524-2665