



# RUSSELLVILLE CITY SCHOOLS

Heath Grimes, Superintendent

*"A Tradition of Excellence"*

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October 19, 2017

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

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.

Russellville City Schools is a rural district of about 2400 students. We serve a diverse population including almost 50% Hispanic students, many of whom English is not their first language. Many of our students receive EI services. We serve a high poverty population (all of our students qualify for a free breakfast and lunch through the CEP program).

The E-Rate funding is essential to providing infrastructure so that all of our schools have high speed internet access. We have been able to use other state and federal funds to meet professional development needs and to provide credit recovery courses so that we can dedicate our E-Rate money for improving internet infrastructure and communication.

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 in the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more



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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.

We have already used all of our Category 2 funding to upgrade infrastructure and connectivity. Although we still have many improvements we would like to make in order to serve our students better, we would be in poor shape without the E-Rate funds that have been made available so far. We need the funds so that we can continue to improve the services we provide our students and provide upgrades in the future.

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,

Heath Grimes  
Superintendent

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