



Building Bridges to the Future

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

October 20, 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 school districts, such as ours to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

With an increase of technology in the classroom, it is critical to have community wide access to high-speed internet – student learning no longer stops at the end of the school day.

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 in 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

Districts may not yet been provided with the opportunity to realize the benefits of E-Rate Category II funding; as technology changes, this funding will be critical to upgrading existing equipment for both educational institutions and public libraries.

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 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.

In closing, I reiterate the Riverview School 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,

Dr. Anthony L. Smith
Superintendent
Riverview School District