

COLUMBIA COUNTY LIBRARY

2057 North Jackson Magnolia, AR 71753

870-234-1991

RE: Wireline Competition Bureau Seeking Comments on E-rate Category Two
WC Docket No. 13-184

Thank you for asking for input on the impact of having access to secure and sufficient funding for the Columbia County Library's Wi-Fi and internal connections.

Before the E-rate Modernization in 2014 Priority 2 services were hard to access unless the library was at a 90% discount rate. We simply assumed there would be no funding left after all requests for Internet access were funded. Columbia County Library decided to concentrate on upgrading to fiber so that when we were able to upgrade Wi-Fi services for the community there would be a fast and reliable connection.

USAC data shows that most libraries are eligible for a 70% discount or less but according to the American Library Association many libraries simply stopped bothering to apply for Wi-Fi funding. To me this is understandable. Applying for e-rate requires extra work and specialized knowledge and if it is likely the project won't be funded, then it's not worth the effort.

A few states reported that no libraries received Wi-Fi funds since the beginning of the E-rate program, Columbia County Library being one of these libraries. After having fiber installed last year, we began the process of applying for an upgrade to the small Wi-Fi system the library already had in place. Because many patrons turn to Columbia County Library to use our Wi-Fi on their tablets, laptops, and other devices we don't need an outdated system for this.

According to the Pew Research Center just over one-in-ten American adults are "smartphone-only" internet users – meaning they own a smartphone, but do not have traditional home broadband service. Library users here are downloading job applications, applying for financial aid, seeking health information, updating apps, and communicating with family and friends using smartphones. All of this is dependent on a strong Wi-Fi signal. Soon Columbia County Library will host a coding seminar. Dependable Wi-Fi throughout the library is needed for activities such as this.

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(\$5.00 for a selected category of larger urban and suburban libraries) per square foot, libraries can finally upgrade outdated equipment or plan for new projects. They will 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. Small libraries like us depend on this funding.

Rhonda Rolan