



# Washington County Schools

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*Robin Cochran, Superintendent*

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

October XX, 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 schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

E-Rate funding is crucial to Washington County School's technology vision of high speed internet access to all classrooms. This includes having the necessary high speed networking equipment from the core to the classroom. Our E-Rate funds total approximately 70% of our technology budget per year and without this funding support, our 1600 students would have a difficult time becoming college and career ready. Approximately 25% of our students currently have internet access at home and because of the rural setting in Washington County so having high speed access within the school district is a must have to allow students access to information and coursework online.

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 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.

Washington County Schools has already used some or all of its E-Rate Category 2 allotment for the following items, high speed networking equipment including wireless access point in every classroom and core network switching. The connectivity provided by these Category 2 items has improved our school or district's educational experience by providing access to online learning applications, distance learning, collaboration with students in other countries and video field trips that would not otherwise be available. The Category 2 funding not only can and does assist in this high speed access but there also needs funding to continue to replace and upgrade this equipment for years to come.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mike Scyphers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" and last name "Scyphers" clearly distinguishable.

Mike Scyphers  
Washington County Schools Technology Director