

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of )  
 )  
Establishing Emergency Connectivity Fund ) WC Docket No. 21-93  
to Close the Homework Gap )  
 )

**REPLY COMMENTS OF  
THE ADVANCED TELEVISION BROADCASTING ALLIANCE**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Advanced Television Broadcasting Alliance (“ATBA”) is the trade association representing the Low Power Television Industry and Over-the-Top (OTT) industries. Membership includes over 2,000+ low-power television broadcast stations and translators, full power television broadcasters, OTT companies & allied industry organizations and affiliated companies. Our mission is to preserve and promote the efficient and effective use of all television broadcast spectrum and broadband bandwidth. ATBA is committed to the evolution of broadcasting and ensuring spectrum licensed to low power television stations is utilized to its fullest capabilities. And as broadcasters, we are also committed to upholding the localism obligations required of licensees.

To that end, ATBA is a strong supporter of datacasting enabled by digital broadcasting for its demonstrated ability to deliver mission critical data to first responders – and in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic – provide critical distance learning capabilities to students across the United States. ATBA files these reply comments in support of the comments made by ARK Multicasting that datacasting

devices should be eligible for funding through the Emergency Connectivity Fund created in the American Rescue Plan.

## **II. DISTANCE LEARNING IS THE IDEAL USE CASE FOR DATACASTING**

ATBA echoes the comments of ARK Multicasting that the Emergency Connectivity Fund public notice assigns too much attention to traditional unicast broadband networks while ignoring the significant benefits that datacasting offers with the recent advances in technology. Remote learning is rife with duplicative broadband content which needlessly contributes to bandwidth congestion, particularly in rural areas. Video lectures, presentation notes and homework assignments are not only bandwidth intensive, but are identical for all students in a class. Sending these duplicative files over a unicast network can cause bandwidth constraints particularly in rural areas where connectivity may be limited. In contrast, the multicast nature of datacasting can effortlessly deliver these files to any home in a broadcaster's service contour.

Accordingly, the Commission has indentified concerns regarding to the bandwidth constraints of unicast networks by seeking comment on appropriate speed tiers and data caps. ATBA urges the Commission against defining broadband in such a limiting manner that students continue to be denied access to remote learning simply because they are not served by a provider that meets an arbitrary definition. Indeed, many commentors in this docket are attempting to monopolize available funding by urging a definition of broadband that excludes their competitors or competing technologies. This regulatory rent seeking is antithetical to Congressional intent, which is to accelerate the use of distance learning to as many students as possible -- not to enrich one provider as much as possible.

Similarly, the Commission should also not limit eligibility for device support by strictly defining WiFi, modems and routers. Any device that is capable of receiving data and providing a student with

remote access to classroom lectures and assignments should be considered a modem for these purposes. The broadest possible definitions for what constitutes WiFi, modems, routers and broadband will offer school districts and libraries the widest possible choice of devices and technologies that meet their unique distance learning needs. In areas where connectivity is limited or non-existent, datacasting can close the homework gap via the existing broadcast infrastructure simply by funding datacasting receivers for students. In other areas, high throughput fiber connections might help level the playing field for students struggling to afford broadband. Regardless, free market forces, not definitional gatekeeping, will prove to be the most cost-effective and fastest means of closing the homework gap.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

ATBA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in this proceeding. Our members stand ready to do what we do best, serve our communities. If given the opportunity by the Commission, broadcasters can provide connectivity to thousands of unserved students without bandwidth constraints and at minimal cost. Accordingly, the Commission should reject efforts to pigeonhole Emergency Connectivity Funds to particular technologies or providers by promulgating broad definitions that cover a wide range of technologies to allow schools and libraries to pick the broadband solution that best meets their unique needs.

Respectfully submitted,

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