To Whom It May Concern,

On April 20, 2018 I made a request with the FCC to make a decision about a wavier that I filed with them to accept an FCC Form 471 Application. I made the waiver request after realizing that the FCC Form 470 I completed had been submitted incorrectly. The Form 470 was therefore not posted for the correct amount of time and had to be redone. I am the Director of my very small library where I only have one staff computer. This computer is used to submit all FCC Forms, check-in and check-out books, look up references, fill out reports, and complete any other daily task that may be needed. I am the only regular employee of this establishment and recall being uncharacteristically busy the day I was filling the FCC Form 470. As a result, I concluded that the form was simply not submitted, the browser window I had in open in must have been closed, and while I believed I had submitted it, I unfortunately did not.

As this is my first year as Director of this library, this was also my first experience with filling out these FCC Forms. I was not confident in my ability to fill out the Form 471 properly for the first time without help, so I called upon the Assistant Director of the regional office my library is under. Marlow Peters, of the Obion River Regional System, then scheduled a visit to my library (approx. 50 miles away from her office) to guide me in filling out this form. Unfortunately, the earliest she could make this appointment was the deadline for filling the FCC Form 471. It was during this visit that we discovered the Form 470 had not been filed correctly. We were able to pull up the entire form and see that the only part that was left incomplete was the Certification Page.

At this point, Ms. Peters informed me that I would need to file a waiver. I first called USAC to ask what steps needed to be taken to file properly. I followed the instructions given to me by the customer service representative and asked how long it would take for the waiver to be approved or denied, and also how I would be notified of the decision. She told me that I would receive a notification through my email stating that the Form 471 was ready for Certification.

A few days later, I got the email she mentioned and attempted to Certify the FCC Form 471. It did not work. I got the same email several different times. I ended emailing USAC to see what I was doing wrong. The response they sent me did not go to my email, but posted on my USAC dashboard, and unlike every other notification posted to my dashboard I did not get an email telling me about it. A few days later, I logged into USAC to see if any of my questions had been answered, and to see if the most recent Certification notice I was emailed was actually going to work. I saw a post telling me that I needed to call USAC to ask about my wavier within 48 hours from the time the post was made. Since I had no idea it had been posted, the 48 hours had passed. I called the number anyway.

This customer service representative told me that there was nothing that USAC could do. They had no way of knowing if my wavier had been accepted and all of the email I had gotten prompting me to certify the FCC Form 471 were sent in error. She gave me a number for the FCC, telling me that calling it would lead me to someone who had access to my wavier claim and would be able to tell me what decision was made regarding it.

When I called this number, I was told it was wrong and I would need to contact a completely different office at a completely different number. The rep gave it to me and I called.

At this point, weeks had passed from the deadline of the FCC Form 471. The new representative I was speaking with told me that it was this office that I should have called from the beginning. When I told him the reason for my lack of communication was the fact that I was unaware of what to do, and was simply following the instructions given to me by the representatives at USAC and my regional Assistant Director, he told me that my wavier had not been opened due to the fact that I had not communicated with his office. I informed him that I had no idea I was supposed to communicate with his office, and that I, in fact, was unaware of the existence of his office until that day. He told me he would submit an appeal, but it would likely be denied because too much time had passed. I asked if he needed me to provide any additional information to which he replied, not at this time.

Today, I got a memo stating that my appeal has been denied. I would like to be reconsidered. I know that deadlines are in place for a reason. I have set many of them myself. However, I also know that the reason for the creation of the Erate program was to provide Schools and Libraries, most especially those in rural communities, with the help they need to provide internet services to the communities they serve. My library is the only place that many, many members of this community have access to the internet. They use it for homeschooling, job applications, and testing. Children work on school work and play games that we provide, keeping them in a climate controlled building and off of the streets. My library providing internet to these people is vital. As a result of being part of such a small area money is not something that my library comes by very easily. This program keeps my doors open. Without this funding, the historic building that provides this community with literacy, computers, and so much more may well close its doors forever.

If there is any other documentation you need to approve my appeal, please, I urge you to do what no one else has been willing to do during this entire process and communicate those needs with me. I will do any and everything needed to get this funding. Please do not let my inexperience and the severe lack of communication and unwillingness to help on the part of USAC keep my library from receiving the help it needs.

Thank you,

Lori Forrest

Director, Tiptonville Public Library

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