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May 14, 1996

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William F. Caton, Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW
Washington DC 20554

RE: Before the Federal Communications Commission
Washington DC 20554

In the matter of)
Federal-State Joint Board) CC Docket No. 96-45
on Universal Service)

RE: Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Order Establishing Joint Board

REPLY COMMENTS

Dear Secretary Caton

I am writing you as a school librarian at Laconia High School, Laconia, New Hampshire. In the past 2 years we have begun to access online services and the Internet. Our progress was slow because of the costs, especially phone line charges. Just recently a local Internet provider began providing services which has greatly decreased our costs. However that is not a guaranteed service

Our district has limited resources; what the students and staff can find on the Internet has opened a world that we just couldn't access any other way. State funding for education is the lowest among the 50 states; local funding is also difficult to get. Without free network access to schools, I am afraid that this resource will not be available for long. It is vital that our students have the tools they need to develop into educated and competent users of information in our complex society

Leaving the decisions up to the marketplace does not serve our students well. If we believe in education we need to make sure that students get what they need. I urge that the FCC mandate free, high quality, broad bandwidth access for schools and libraries.

Sincerely,

Ruth Stuart

Ruth Stuart, Librarian

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