



P.O. Box 3168
Enid, OK 73702
(405) 233-2300
(405) 233-8802 Fax

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

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MAY 9 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

TO: Commissioner Rachelle Chong

FR: W. Eugene Baxter, Dr. P.H., Administrator

RE: Telecommunications Regulations

DATE: May 7, 1997

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Integris Bass Baptist Health Center asks for your consideration and support of two matters within the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

▶ Universal Service should support distance charges.

To bring telecommunications for health care providers from Fairview, Oklahoma to a hub site in Enid, Oklahoma would be cost prohibitive. Fairview is 45 miles from Enid. If U.S. Territory West base rates of \$14 per mile per month were used, a base cost of \$7,560 per year would be required. Budget expenditures of \$5,000-\$10,000 per year are critical items in rural hospitals.

Many rural hospital boards would be forced to choose between necessary items and telecommunication in their annual budgets. The elimination of distance charges is essential to encourage rural hospitals to participate in a network that can bring needed services to rural Oklahomans who cannot access those services on their own.

▶ Universal Service should support toll-free connections to the Internet.

Many rural health care providers access the Internet as a valuable tool to support their educational needs and clinical practices.

Rural areas are asked to pay toll charges to reach an Internet Service Provider (ISP). This is another cost barrier to the utilization of the telecommunication networks as a valuable medical tool. We request your support for long distance charges associated with the use of ISP.

CC 96-45

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

May 1, 1997

Rachelle B. Chong, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M St. NW, Room 844
Washington, D.C. 20054

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MAY - 9 1997

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Dear Commissioner Chong:

I write in support of meaningful discounts on telecommunications services for schools and libraries so that every school child and life-long learner can have access to the world of information technology. The Telecommunications Act - through its Universal Service Fund provisions - mandates the development of special discount rates for all schools and libraries so that they can secure services at affordable prices.

There is no doubt that advanced telecommunications services are important to improving learning, sparking the imagination and leveling the playing field for all our nation's people. Affordable access to technology in all classrooms and libraries will assure that our children and life-learners can connect with the technology they would need to compete in today's and tomorrow's workforce. Advanced telecommunications services in the classroom will also create informed and skilled consumers of new technology well into the 21st century. As of now our school system is unable to afford Internet capabilities to extend access to each classroom. Our local telephone company has been reluctant to give our schools reduced rates. We would like for our students to have the same opportunities that are afforded to students in more affluent areas. Without the passage of the Telecommunications Act, there is very little hope that we will ever be able to provide this opportunity.

Last November, the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service sent to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) a set of recommendations for implementing the Universal Service Fund provisions related to the schools and libraries. These recommendations would give our learning institutions significant discounts on all services that are commercially available, with deeper discounts for those schools and libraries least able to pay and more expensive to service. All schools would get discounts on connections to classrooms and Internet connectivity, both of which are essential to providing the most advanced learning opportunities to the greatest number of students.

I urge your support for the Joint Board's recommendations. Taken as a whole, they will provide affordable discounts for a full range of services needed to meet each community's diverse needs. Most importantly, these provisions, if adopted by the FCC, will make advanced technology for learning available to all Americans.

Sincerely,

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CC 96-45



MICHIGAN HEALTH & HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Linking patients, communities, and providers together for better health.

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MAY 9 1997

May 7, 1997

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Sent by FAX

FCC Commissioner Mr. James Quello -- FAX: 202-418-2802
FCC Commissioner Rachelle Chong -- FAX: 202-418-2820
FCC Commissioner Susan Ness -- FAX: 202-418-2821

BUCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

SUBJECT: Telecommunications Relations Affecting Telemedicine

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association's 167 hospitals, of which over 100 are located in rural Michigan towns, villages and cities, I extend our support for a "Universal Service Policy" which is part of the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

MHA is supportive of the FCC's Advisory Committee on Telecommunications and provide rural access to telecommunications services at about the same overall costs that are faced by urban health care providers. Elimination of distance charges is essential.

Additionally, MHA supports the toll free connections to the Internet. Eligible rural health care providers should receive support to help pay toll charges if they cannot connect to the Internet via a local call.

Thank you for your consideration of MHA's comments.

Sincerely,

Laura J. Redoutey
Group Vice President, Advocacy

LJR:bw

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SPENCER JOHNSON, PRESIDENT

CC 96-45



Thomas H. Boyd Memorial Hospital

R.H.C., G.C.A., R.M.N.H.

800 School Street • Carrollton, Illinois 62016
Telephone (217) 942-6946 • Fax (217) 942-9012

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MAY -9 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

May 7, 1997

Commissioner Rachelle Chong
Fax # 202-418-2820

RE: Universal Service Vote

Dear Commissioner Chong:

Please support this universal service policy as being a key element for small rural hospitals in using telemedicine systems. This also will help deliver a cost effective Internet service to our facility.

Our facility is a 73 bed rural hospital located in Central Illinois. Our population consists of mainly medicare and medicaid recipients. We are looking to provide better service to our residents by using a telemedicine system. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Deborah Campbell
Administrator

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C O V E R

FAX

S H E E T

To: Commissioner Rachelle Chong
Fax #: 202-418-2820
Subject: Upcoming Vote by FCC Commissioners on Telecommunications Regulations
Affecting Telemedicine
Date: May 7, 1997
Pages: 2, including this cover sheet.

COMMENTS:

From the desk of...

Judith Pierce
Executive Secretary
Community Methodist Hospital
P. O. Box 48
Henderson, Kentucky 42420

502 827 7500
Fax: 502 827 7402



CC96-45

May 7, 1997

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

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MAY -9 1997
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Carol Blevins Ormay
Vice President/Membership Services
Kentucky Hospital Association
P. O. Box 24163
Louisville, Kentucky 40224-0163

Dear Ms. Ormay:

I am writing this letter to show Community Methodist Hospital's support for the "universal service" telecommunications policy, a part of the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which is to be voted upon this date by FCC Commissioners.

This policy could play a significant role in the operations of small rural hospitals, considering the costs per mile for a communications line to their facility. Unregulated fees certainly could reduce the ability of those facilities to bring services into their communities which are so necessary in today's culture.

Please count Community Methodist Hospital among the supporters for universal service regulations.

Very truly yours,

COMMUNITY METHODIST HOSPITAL

Bruce D. Begley
Executive Director

BDB/jcp

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List ABCDE

CC 96-45

April 30, 1997

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MAY 9 1997

Rachelle B. Chong, Commissioner

Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W., Room 844
Washington, D.C. 20554

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Commissioner:

We, a coalition of Alaska's educational leaders, are writing to urge your approval of the recommendations of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service. Those recommendations will come before you on May 8.

Affordable access to advanced telecommunications is an essential element of equal educational opportunity in Alaska. Affordable access to advanced technologies can mean that, for the first time, a student in a remote village will have access to the same abundance of learning resources and opportunities to interact with people from different cultures and experiences that is available to any other child in the United States.

The Joint Board's recommendations can lead to an economic, as well as an educational breakthrough for Alaskans, allowing our students to acquire the skills to compete in a global workforce and to grow into consumers of new technology into the 21st century.

Powerful forces may tell you that the discounts provided for education in the Joint Board's recommendations are not needed. Others may say that school districts wouldn't know what to do with advanced telecommunications if they were available. Neither assertion is true. Alaskan school districts stand ready to put the technology to use to improve student learning if and when schools are able to access it through the discounts recommended by the Joint Board, including connections to classrooms and Internet connectivity.

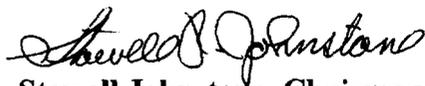
America has refused to accept any less a standard for its children than equal educational opportunity--without regard to the accident of birth or geography.

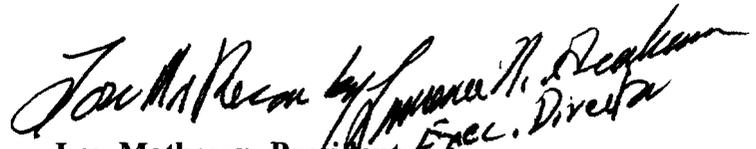
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DATE _____

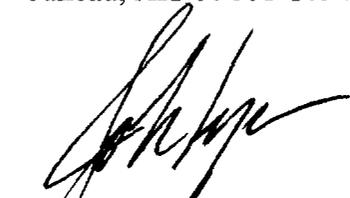
Your vote for the Joint Board's recommendations will honor and advance this standard for the students in our charge.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the unique needs of Alaska's children.

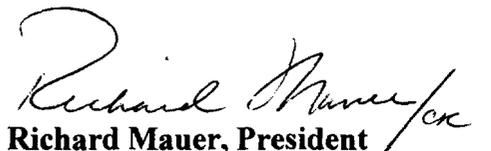
Sincerely,

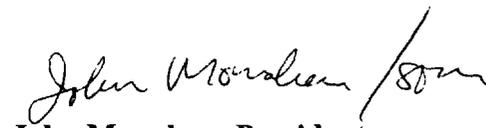

Stowell Johnstone, Chairman
Alaska State Board of Education
801 W. 10th St., Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-1894


Lou Matheson, President
Alaska Association of Secondary
School Principals
1720 Otter Street
Anchorage, AK 99504


John Cyr, President
National Education Association-Alaska
114 Second St.
Juneau, AK 99801


Fredi Buffmire
Alaska Association of Elementary
School Principals
426 Rogers Rd.
Kenai, AK 99611


Richard Mauer, President
Association of Alaska School Boards
316 W. 11th St.
Juneau, AK 99801-1510


John Monahan, President
Alaska Association of School
Administrators
326 4th St., #404
Juneau, AK 99801

cc: The Honorable Fran Ulmer
Lieutenant Governor, State of Alaska

CC 96-45

FAX TRANSMISSION

HENDRY REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
500 WEST SUGARLAND HIGHWAY
CLEWISTON, FLORIDA 33440
(941) 902-3078
FAX: (941) 983-2979

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MAY 9 1997
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

To: Commissioner Rachelle Chong, FCC **Date:** May 7, 1997
Fax #: 202-418-2820 **Pages:** 1, including this cover sheet.
From: Rudy Reinhardt, CEO
Subject: Telecommunication Regulations Affecting Telemedicine

COMMENTS: Strongly support the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. This act will positively impact our ability to obtain timely medical information in our rural health care environment. The current rate for telecommunications in the rural area makes Internet referral services too costly for this medical center. Universal service would allow rural health care providers better access to telecommunications services. I urge the FCC to support the subsidy of distance charges. It is essential for rural health care providers to have ready and reasonably priced access to information and telemedicine services.

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CC 96-45



Greenwood Leflore Hospital
So Far Advanced So Close To Home

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

May 6, 1997

RECEIVED
MAY 9 1997
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Office of Secretary
Greenwood, MS
601-459-7000

Commissioner Rachelle Chong, Republican

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Commissioner Chong:

It is our understanding that the Federal Communications Commission is scheduled to vote this week to adopt regulations governing "universal service" policies as part of the implementation of the Telecommunication Act of 1996.

The universal service policies of the Act mandate that the FCC direct telecommunication rate subsidies to schools, libraries and rural health providers. In the case of health care, the FCC must make telecommunication rates for eligible health care providers comparable to telecommunication rates for similar services in urban areas.

The goal of this provision is to lessen the difference between the quality of health care services available in urban areas and those in rural areas, many of which suffer from a lack of health care resources and access to medical professionals, as well as the burden of being at greater distances from advanced medical technology and treatment facilities.

We feel that "telehealth" has the potential to help our member hospitals and health systems improve the quality and lessen the cost of health care delivery in rural areas. That's why we hope you will help to keep the telecommunications costs for our facilities as low as possible by adopting the following policy positions related to universal service provisions:

- o Universal service should support distance charges
- o Universal service should support toll-free connections to the Internet

Thank you for your immediate consideration and support on this issue. If I can provide additional information, or be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Terrell M. Cobb
Executive Director

TMC/aj

No. of Copies rec'd 1
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CC 96-45



May 7, 1997

Commissioner Rachell Chong
Fax: 202-418-2200
E-Mail: sness@fcc.gov

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MAY 9 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Commissioner Chong:

It is our understanding that the Federal Communications Commission is scheduled to vote this week to adopt regulations governing "universal service" policies as part of the implementation of the Telecommunication Act of 1996.

The universal service policies of the Act mandate that the FCC direct telecommunication rate subsidies to schools, libraries and rural health providers. In the case of health care, the FCC must make telecommunication rates for eligible health care providers comparable to telecommunications rates for similar services in urban areas.

The goal of this provision is to lessen the difference between the quality of health care services available in urban areas and those in rural areas, many of which suffer from a lack of health care resources and access to medical professionals, as well as the burden of being at greater distances from advanced medical technology and treatment facilities.

We feel that "telehealth" has the potential to help our member hospitals and health systems improve the quality and lessen the cost of health care delivery in rural areas. That's why we hope to help keep the telecommunications costs for our facilities as low as possible by adopting the following policy positions related to universal service provisions:

- o Universal service should support distance charges.
- o Universal service should support toll-free connections to the Internet.

Thank you for your immediate consideration and support on this issue. If I can provide additional information, or be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

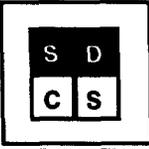
Sincerely,

Kevin E. Blackwell
Chief Executive Officer

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1

CC 96-45



**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS**

EDUCATION CENTER • 4100 Normal Street, San Diego, California 92103-2682

(619) 293-8056
FAX (619) 297-5624

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RON OTTINGER
President

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

MAY - 9 1997

April 24, 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Rachelle B. Chong, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 844
Washington, D.C. 20544

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

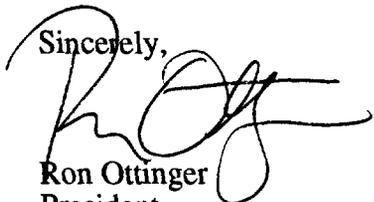
Dear Commissioner Chong:

As President of the Board of Education, San Diego Unified School District, I am writing to strongly urge you to support the Joint Federal-State Universal Service Board recommendation to establish an education rate (e-rate) for public schools and libraries.

Because this district believes strongly that providing all students equal access to technology is important in public education we have committed significant resources from our general education fund to wire schools to enable them to connect to the Internet and are attempting to provide classrooms the necessary hardware. The district has already applied for and has received a California Public Utilities Commission discount rate provided for data and voice lines for state public schools, which gives a slightly more than 50 percent savings over regular rates. This provides the district a considerable savings in utility bills, dollars that come directly out of the regular education program. At this time there are no additional district funds set aside for the further expansion of technology in our schools. As a large urban school technology provider we will only be able to provide Internet access in all classrooms through the availability of further utility discounts.

At this time all of our 160 schools and sites are connected to a Wide Area Network and have access to the Internet. We are working toward wiring and equipping all classrooms. The e-rate will go a long way towards making equity possible and we strongly support its implementation as recommended by the Joint Federal-State Universal Service Board.

Your vote of support on this issue when it comes before you next month would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ron Ottinger
President
Board of Education

RO:mer

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CC96-45

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MAY 9 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

1700 Via Casoli

Monterey, Ca 93940

April 23, 1997

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

Hon. Rachelle B. Chong, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 844
Washington, DC 20554

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Commissioner Chong,

You are considering e-rate draft rules (CC Docket No.96-95). This proposal will give important discounts for telecommunication services to school districts. I ask your support for these rules.

These discounts will help schools, which have tight budgets to accomplish basic educational tasks, reach their goals of having telecommunications services available to their students.

A YES vote is important to our nation's school children and their future in an increasingly technological world.

Sincerely,

Sharon Enca

Classroom Teacher
Foothill School
Monterey, Ca

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SIERRA SANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

**SUPERINTENDENT and
HUMAN RESOURCES**
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FAX 375-3338

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Perry Hayes
(760)375-3923
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Michael H. McGrath
(760) 375-4340
FAX 375-4562

SPECIAL PROJECTS
Howard N. Smith
(760) 375-3923
FAX 375-1959



District Office: 113 Felspar Avenue, Ridgecrest, CA 93555-3589

April 17, 1997

The Honorable Rachelle B. Chong, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 844
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Commissioner Chong:

RE: CC Docket No. 96-45

RECEIVED
MAY - 9 1997
Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

I am writing to you in regard to the federal "E-Rate" Telecommunications Discount Program. I am a locally elected school board member from Sierra Sands Unified School District, and I would like to express my strong support for this program and the proposed regulations governing its implementation.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the Federal-State Joint Board discount plan will guarantee that even the poorest schools will have access to the Internet and the ability to provide distance-learning opportunities. The \$2.25 billion a year will address the needs of schools across the country, and more importantly, the plan will bring telecommunications services directly to the classrooms where they can have the greatest impact on students. It is important to remember that each element of this plan is vital to the overall success of the discount program. Therefore, the inclusion of discounts for internal classroom connections should not be eliminated, nor should the size of the Universal Service Fund be reduced. As I am sure you are aware, this program is essential for preparing our students to enter the work force of tomorrow.

The E-Rate Telecommunications Discount Program is desperately overdue, and our students need these discounts for telecommunications services this year. I urge you and the other FCC commissioners to fully support the recommendations of the Joint Board and approve the proposed final regulations regarding the discount plan for universal service for schools and libraries.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Scott'.

Michael Scott
Board of Education

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CC 96-45

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MAY 9 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

May 6, 1997

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

Commissioner Rachelle Chong

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Commissioner Rachelle Chong:

I am writing to urge you to vote for the Universal Service Policy which is part of the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The Millard Fillmore Health System, a large health care delivery system in western New York, is affiliated with several rural hospitals through our network, Strategic Partners. These rural providers are trying to continue, on ever dwindling reimbursements, to render access to care to the communities they serve. They are an extremely vital link in providing primary care to rural America. The goal of the Act to lessen the difference between the levels of health care services available to people in urban and rural areas, who suffer from a lack of health care resources and access to medical professionals. Telehealth can greatly improve the quality and lessen the costs of health care in rural areas, but only if telecommunications costs for telehealth applications can be lowered.

Please give your support to this policy.

Sincerely,



Gail Andrees RN
Director of Strategic Partners
Millard Fillmore Health System

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An Affiliate of the
Millard Fillmore Health System

Date: 5/8/97
To: Commissioner Rachelle
Chong
Fax number: (202) 418-2820
From: Craig M. Slater, M.D. *CMS*
Hospital Medical Director
Memorial Hospital at
Gulfport

**Fax
Transmission**

- Please call to confirm receipt
- Please respond by return fax
- Call only if transmission is incomplete

Our phone: (601) 865-3565
Our fax: (601) 865-3214

of pages including cover page: 1

I understand that the Federal Communications Commission is voting this week to adopt regulations to govern "universal service" policies as part of the implementation of the Telecommunication Act of 1996. I further understand that the Act mandates that the FCC direct telecommunication rate subsidies to rural health care providers, amongst others.

This subsidy for rural health care providers is essential to the continuing integration of our health care system--it allows these rural health providers easy electronic access to resources and professionals that they otherwise could not obtain. Because of the importance of this issue, I urge you to support universal service that:

- a) supports distance charges, and
- b) supports toll-free connections to the Internet.

096-45



Gilmore Memorial Hospital

1105 Earl Frye Boulevard

Amory, Mississippi 38821

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL
EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

May 7, 1997

RECEIVED

MAY - 9 1997

Commissioner Rachelle Chong, Republican
FAX: 202-418-2820

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Dear Commissioner Chong:

It is our understanding that the Federal Communications Commission is scheduled to vote this week to adopt regulations governing "universal service" policies as part of the implementation of the Telecommunication Act of 1996.

The universal service policies of the Act mandate that the FCC direct telecommunication rate subsidies to schools, libraries and rural health providers. In the case of health care, the FCC must make telecommunication rates for eligible health care providers comparable to telecommunications rates for similar services in urban areas.

The goal of this provision is to lessen the difference between the quality of health care services available in urban areas and those in rural areas, many of which suffer from a lack of health care resources and access to medical professionals, as well as the burden of being at greater distances from advanced medical technology and treatment facilities.

We feel that "telehealth" has the potential to help our member hospitals and health systems improve the quality and lessen the cost of health care delivery in rural areas. That's why we hope to help keep the telecommunications costs for our facilities as low as possible by adopting the following policy positions related to universal service provisions:

- * Universal service should support distance charges.
- * Universal service should support toll-free connections to the Internet.

Thank you for your immediate consideration and support on this issue. If I can provide additional information, or be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Knight, CHE, CHFP
Vice President/CFO

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CHK/bh

North Sunflower County Hospital

Dedicated to Community Health

840 North Oak Avenue • P.O. Box 369 • Telephone 601/756-2711

Ruleville, Mississippi 38771

FAX #601/756-4114

FAX TRANSMITTAL LETTER

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING THIS COVER LETTER)

2

This facsimile contains CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION which also may be LEGALLY PRIVILEGED and which is intended only for the use of the Addressee named below. If you are not the intended recipient of this facsimile, or the employee or agent responsible for delivering it to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination or copying of this facsimile is strictly prohibited. If you have received this facsimile in error, please immediately notify us by telephone and return the original facsimile to us at the above address via the United States Postal Service. THANK YOU.

DATE: 5-7-97 TIME: 4:00 PM

RECIPIENT'S FAX NUMBER: 202-418-2820

TO: Commissioner Rachelle Chong

~~ADDRESS:~~ Attn: Eileen Huff

RE: Development of Telemedicine for Rural Health Care Providers

FROM: Robert L. Cross, Administrator

IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ALL PAGES, PLEASE CALL BACK IMMEDIATELY
601/756-2711

COMMENTS: _____

North Sunflower County Hospital

Dedicated to Community Health

860 North Oak Avenue - P. O. Box 369 - Telephone 601/756-2711
Pateville, Mississippi 38771

CC 96-45

May 6, 1997

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

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MAY - 9 1997

Commissioner Rachelle Chong

FAX #202-418-2820 Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Dear Commissioner Chong:

It is our understanding that the Federal Communications Commission is scheduled to vote this week to adopt regulations governing "universal service" policies as part of the implementation of the Telecommunication Act of 1996.

The universal service policies of the Act mandate that the FCC direct telecommunication rate subsidies to schools, libraries and rural health providers. In the case of health care, the FCC must make telecommunication rates for eligible health care providers comparable to telecommunications rates for similar services in urban areas.

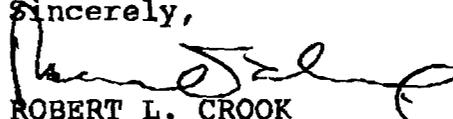
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1. Universal service should support distance charges.
2. Universal service should support toll-free connection to the Internet.

Thank you for your immediate consideration and support on this issue. If I can provide additional information or be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

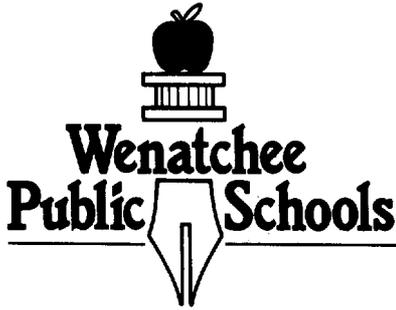
Sincerely,



ROBERT L. CROOK
Administrator

RLC/cb

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235 Sunset Ave.

P.O. Box 1767

Wenatchee, WA 98807-1767

(509) 663-8161

FAX (509) 663-3082

May 2, 1997

Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW, Room 844
Washington, DC 20554

RE: CC Docket No. 96-45

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

RECEIVED

MAY 9 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Dear Commissioner:

I am a superintendent from Wenatchee School District, and I would like to thank you for your dedication in ensuring that all school districts and education consortia will have affordable access to the Information Superhighway.

The Telecommunications Act and the Federal-State Joint Board decision will guarantee that all school districts will have the opportunity to connect to the Internet and provide distance-learning opportunities. The \$2.25 billion a year will address the needs of all our schools, and importantly, the plan will bring Services directly to the classroom where students learn. Your inclusion of internal classroom connections for discounts is vital. This plan is essential for preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

This discount would enable us to direct funds toward software, hardware and other educational resources needed by our students and teachers. It would allow us to continue directing funds toward staff development, basic skills programs and state and local academic reform initiatives. It would help us increase the quality and quantity of Internet service to our students and staff.

Our students need deep discounts for telecommunications services this year, I urge the FCC to fully support of the Joint Board's discount plan for universal service for schools. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

John W. Gordon
Superintendent

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