

September 30, 2014

Dear Chairman Wheeler and Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O’Rielly,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our appreciation to the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) for seeking input on the funding needs of the E-rate program. With a united voice, we write to request a permanent increase in funding to the E-rate program to allow schools and public libraries to keep pace with the rapidly increasing connectivity demands that they face.

The E-rate program, in its first generation, proved an unprecedented success in expanding connectivity to the nation’s schools and libraries. In less than twenty years since Congress established the program, E-rate played a critical role in transforming the level of connectivity from less than one quarter of schools and libraries to nearly all connected today. However, the E-rate program’s job is not done. Achieving the broadband goals established by the Commission in July will require additional investment.

The influx of learning devices in classrooms and libraries has increased demands on networks. Yesterday’s connectivity speeds simply do not meet the needs of today’s students and library patrons. Efficient and dynamic classrooms and libraries need high-speed connectivity, and they need additional E-rate support to deliver it. E-rate must possess sufficient resources to ensure that all students and patrons can gain access in schools and libraries to the high speed broadband they need to excel in school and beyond. The E-rate program also benefits our nation’s educators, allowing them to take full advantage of the online and digital resources and tools needed to transform teaching and learning. America’s librarians are also being asked to do more than ever as they are seeing a growing demand for internet access as adult learning and workforce development are being re-envisioned in the wake of the economic recession.

In a time when almost every single classroom and the majority of libraries in the nation have lower speed internet access than the average American home while serving multiple times more users per day, it is time to ensure that our libraries and schools are connected with the quality of connectivity that is sufficient and scalable for today’s ever-growing connectivity needs. A sustainable, well-funded E-rate program is critical to ensuring educational opportunity and success for every student and library patron as we look to bolster the nation’s economic competitiveness.

A permanent increase in funding to the E-rate program is needed to ensure the following.

- Access to 21<sup>st</sup> century education and learning: Giving all students access to modern education requires having reliable infrastructure in place. The Commission must deliver on the shared goal of connecting students and adults to high-speed broadband through schools and libraries to support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.
- From basic connectivity to capacity: To move from basic connectivity to meeting capacity needs, E-rate funding must be addressed now, not later. Any serious conversation about ensuring the sustainability of a successful E-rate program will include additional funding for the program. Nearly two decades of success later, the continued

success of the E-rate depends on the program's ability to not only expand access to connectivity, but to ensure access to adequate, sustainable capacity, and to do so with funding that is sufficient.

- Equity: As E-rate is sufficiently funded to expand and ensure adequate access to connectivity, we must maintain the program's commitment to equity, including a focus on disadvantaged communities so that everyone, everywhere – rural, urban and suburban – has access to sufficient capacity.

To ensure the E-rate can provide sustainable broadband capacity to our nation's schools and libraries, we call upon the Commission to permanently increase funding to support current and future goals of the E-rate program.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
ACCSES  
Alliance for Excellent Education  
American Federation of Teachers  
American Foundation for the Blind  
American Library Association  
Amplify  
Association of Educational Service Agencies  
Association of School Business Officials International  
Benton Foundation  
Brain Injury Association of America  
Carolina Biological Supply Company  
Center for Rural Strategies  
Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)  
Cisco  
Coalition for Community Schools  
Common Cause  
CoSN – the Consortium for School Networking  
Council for Learning Disabilities  
Council of the Great City Schools  
Dell Inc.  
digedu  
Digital Promise  
EducationSuperHighway  
EverFi  
Famigo  
First Focus  
Follett Corporation  
General Federation of Women's Clubs  
Gigabit Libraries Network  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt  
International Society for Technology in Education

Kajeet, Inc.  
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Learning First Alliance  
Lumen Touch  
Funds for Learning  
Magnet Schools of America  
Manage Mobility  
Microsoft  
NAACP  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools  
National Association of Independent Schools  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Association of State Boards of Education  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Catholic Educational Association  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Education Association  
National PTA  
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition  
National Rural Education Association  
National School Boards Association  
National Title I Association  
Neverware  
New America's Open Technology Institute  
Organizations Concerned about Rural Education  
Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills  
PerformanceED  
PresenceLearning  
Presidio Networked Solutions  
Public Knowledge  
Public Library Association  
Rethink Education  
Rural Broadband Policy Group  
Rural School and Community Trust  
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition  
Software & Information Industry Association  
State Educational Technology Directors Association  
Teach for America  
TechNet  
Telecommunications Industry Association  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Urban Libraries Council  
World Education, Inc.