



**Kodiak Island Borough School District**

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Kodiak, Alaska 99615  
(907) 481-6202

Office of the Superintendent

October 21, 2014

Ms. Cara Voth  
Telecommunications Access Policy Division  
Wireline Competition Bureau  
445 12th Street, S.W. Room 5-A365  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Notice of Ex Parte In the Matter of Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries, WC Docket No. 13-184

Dear Ms. Voth:

I am the Superintendent of Schools for the Kodiak Island Borough School District serving fourteen small schools in the Kodiak Island Archipelago. Our district occupies the same landmass of the state of Connecticut and is home to 14,000 residents. Half of our schools are extremely remote and are essentially dependent on video conferencing services to connect each classroom, student, and teacher to meet student needs. I have recently learned that video conferencing may be removed from priority one E-rate funding. Our students in both the KIBSD and across Alaska will be both negatively and severely impacted by the elimination of video conferencing services.

This service is the lifeline between our remote schools to create connection and provide a continuous presence of supervision, interaction, and building an effective learning environment for students. Sadly, Alaska bears the distinction of having the nation's highest suicide rate among school-aged children. Since harnessing the video teleconferencing system and partnering other methods to connect students to caring adults through the video systems provided by E-rate, the KIBSD has not lost a school aged student due to suicide in six years and counting. There is simply no way for this story to be told in a letter or brief conversation. I cannot emphasize just how important these services are to our way of life in Alaska. The KIBSD does use other Internet based video tools, but none match the whole classroom multisite connectivity and quality of service provided by video conferencing services through E-rate. Although some of our hub schools have fiber optic lines most of our schools depend on a satellite-based bandwidth. These schools have between 1.5 to 7 megabits of connectivity. The separate managed video conferencing services allow our small schools to successfully connect beyond what can be accomplished through mere Internet based video solutions.

Before video conferencing, our remote students did not have supported instruction in upper level math, language arts and science. We have to support k12 schools with only two teachers responsible for all subjects and courses through graduation. Video conferencing allows a teacher from each site to teach their area of expertise to students on all other schools creating a larger, one-school model. We have increased student activities and brought high quality music instruction to students who otherwise would have none. Our remote students are increasing their academic performance and are increasing performance on college readiness exams. I cannot imagine an unnecessary disruption to these services. Please take appropriate action to provide for Alaska's children by preserving video conferencing in priority one E-rate.

If there had been any warning that video conferencing was in danger of being eliminated from priority one E-rate, KIBSD could have taken appropriate action to alter our infrastructure and seek an alternative solution. If the intention to remove this service persists then we are left without time or resources to change our course. Please do not remove video conferencing services, but if it must be removed, please give us time to transition from one system to another by phasing it out over three or more years. I have included a letter from our Internet service provider for more technical details of the need in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stewart McDonald", written over a faint, illegible background.

Stewart McDonald  
Superintendent