

Lifeline Expansion and Modernization Support Letter

August 17, 2015
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Lifeline program

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner O'Rielly, Commissioner Pai, and Commissioner Rosenworcel:

As school and district leaders, we urge the Federal Communications Commission (the Commission) to continue its support of the Lifeline program and to modernize and expand the program to support broadband internet access.

We commend the swift action the Commission took to expand and modernize the E-rate program, making internet access a reality in high-need classrooms across the country. However, much of the advantage of education technology lies in student access to information and education tools outside of the classroom. Sadly, many students do not have broadband access at home and cannot complete assignments and supplement their learning outside school. If the nation wants to produce globally competitive graduates with twenty-first-century skills and competencies, this "homework gap" must be addressed.

Having access to broadband internet at home will also increase connectivity and opportunities for those who play vital roles in the lives of students outside the classroom—parents, guardians, other relatives, and community members. Lifeline support for broadband service, including wireline and wireless services, will create communities of lifelong learners and support systems that can further raise achievement and success throughout the country.

As Commissioner Clyburn stated during the Commission vote on E-rate expansion, "Broadband is the greatest equalizer of our time, but this only holds true if everyone has access." We, too, believe that three legs of support are required to make broadband access meaningful in students' lives, as Commissioner Clyburn stated: "Broadband at school, broadband in the library, and broadband at home. Absent one leg, the stool does not stand." Since its inception, Lifeline has played a pivotal role in connecting all Americans to vital communication services, leaving no one behind. Today, those networks have moved beyond voice-only into a digital world; access to broadband at home is now a necessity in the twenty-first century.

We support the Commission in its efforts to modernize the Lifeline program to ensure that all Americans, particularly students and families most at risk, have access to affordable, high-quality broadband service. The Commission's leadership is critical for preparing the nation's students to compete in an increasingly global workforce.

Sincerely,

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