

May 30, 2007

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Portals II, Room TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Reply Comments
Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications
Capability
GN Docket No. 07-45

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I am writing to submit these comments in support of the Comments of the American Library Association (ALA) in this proceeding. I am Library Director at the Pillsbury Free Library in Warner, New Hampshire. This public library, as are most libraries in New Hampshire, is supported entirely by local funding from a town of fewer than 3000 people. No funding comes from the County, State or Federal level.

The ALA raised some important issues in its comments in this proceeding. I am writing to augment some of those concerns. First, we support the ALA's request that the Commission explore the impact of broadband technologies on public libraries. As the ALA noted, about 98% of public libraries provide some form of Internet access. In our small Town, we offer 7 Internet computers to our patrons and also wireless access. In addition, we may have 3-4 staff members simultaneously using the Internet on the public's behalf for book ordering, Inter-library loan, reference work, etc.

The Internet connectivity provided by public libraries is increasingly important. Our public computers are used by students, the hard of hearing, special education/vocational workers, tutors, low-income people, international visitors and temporary workers, etc. Some of the most important and frequent uses are job searching, tax filing, instructional sites, travelers who are confirming ticket arrangements, and communication over long distances or among deaf people.

The ALA also noted that only 45% of public libraries nationwide are satisfied with their level of broadband connectivity. We are also concerned that the current marketplace is not working adequately to meet the needs of public libraries. In our state, the primary providers of broadband services are

limited in the area they cover, and there is little or no competition in this state. We have found that the prices for the best broadband connectivity (\$89 / month for a 1 Mbs DSL line) available to us are excessive for the funding we have available. The 384 Kbs DSL level we have been fortunate to receive at no cost (normally \$49/month) is totally inadequate to support the newer multimedia needs of ten simultaneous users, but the cost of the fastest available service (1 Mbs DSL) is beyond our budget. After this year, we have been informed by TDS Telecom, the connection will no longer be provided for free.

As a result of these costs and speed limitations, we are not able to meet the needs of our patrons as we would like and as they expect. For instance, patrons who wish to download our new free MP3 audio books tie up the bandwidth for everyone, for excessive amounts of time. Add this to high demand after school lets out, and wireless access, and the staff is unable to work effectively on-line in addition to the public becoming frustrated. Many students listen to music while watching streaming video and using several IM windows and email all at one time. Browsing and loading MySpace or Facebook pages with all their photos also stresses the bandwidth available and everything slows to molasses for every user in the building.

For these reasons, we support ALA's suggestion that the FCC should encourage the public providers of broadband connectivity to work more closely with public libraries. Our public libraries need more bandwidth, preferably at lower rates than the general "market-based rates" that are currently being offered to us. We would like to find a way for the broadband providers in our state to work with us to find solutions to our broadband issues. In some areas the constant change of ownership makes it complicated to maintain a relationship with providers, and causes email addresses to change frequently. The reluctance to provide inexpensive or free connectivity could be overcome if providers realized that libraries are acting as a de facto marketing tool, rather than as competition: people who experience excellent Internet conditions at the library will want to have the same at their homes and businesses.

Given the important role that public libraries play in our society and economy, we encourage the FCC to increase its focus on the need to provide public libraries with enhanced broadband connectivity in this proceeding. There are many underserved groups that depend on libraries for their connectivity.

In addition to this issue, I would like the FCC to address the way public libraries and other municipal offices are charged for phone service: because we are not residences, and have multiple lines, we are charged the full

“business” rates for each line- although three of our five lines are used solely to fulfill life & safety guidelines for the fire, security and elevator systems, and are never used for regular communications. We pay \$128 a month with less than \$10 being due to long distance calls.

Sincerely,

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