



April 4, 2011

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Request for Extension of the June 30, 2011 Deadline for Funding
Commitments under the Universal Service Rural Health Care Pilot Program
(WC Docket No. 02-60)

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The purpose of this letter is to request a one year extension of the June 30, 2011 deadline for funding under the Commission's Universal Service Rural Health Care Pilot Program ("RHCPP").

The Association of Washington Public Hospital Districts ("AWPHD") filed an application for funding under the RHCPP on behalf of the Washington Telehealth Consortium ("WTC") to design the Washington Telehealth Exchange ("WTE"). WTE will connect multiple local healthcare networks, which, in turn, support and connect hundreds of healthcare providers, including rural hospitals, rural clinics, tribal health centers, public health departments, mental health service providers, research centers and urban hospitals. WTE will improve the quality and cost effectiveness of healthcare for the residents of Washington State.

Upon acceptance of WTC's application by the Commission, AWPHD, on behalf of WTC, began the process of completing FCC Form 465 and drafting a Request for Proposal ("RFP") for the design of WTE. Unfortunately, there was some confusion by USAC about the scope of work, which delayed the project. The project was further delayed by changes to both the Form 465 and the RFP requested by USAC. (The RFP, for instance, was before USAC for the better part of a year.)

The development of a Washington state Health Information Exchange ("HIE") has also contributed to the delay. In order to meet various funding deadlines, HIE, which was not envisioned when the RHCPP was first announced, has demanded significant time and attention that could have otherwise been devoted to the WTE project. Moreover, since HIE acts as the hub for sharing medical information, it was decided to first allow the development of HIE before finalizing the WTE design so that WTE and HIE work together seamlessly.

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Now that HIE is in its final development stages and USAC has approved FCC Form 465 and the RFP for the WTE, AWPHD, on behalf of WTC, can begin the process of selecting a vendor and completing the design of the WTE. Nevertheless, AWPHD may not be able to meet the June 30, 2011 funding deadline. As a result, AWPHD requests a one year extension of the deadline.

AWPHD believes that a one year extension is in the public interest. It will ensure the completion of the design of WTE, which the Commission has determined is a project worthy of RHCPP funding. The passage of time has not diluted that determination. Specifically, the project will substantially improve healthcare delivery in Washington State, especially its rural communities, but unless the funding deadline is extended, it is possible that the WTE project will be abandoned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Mero', with a large loop at the end.

Jeff Mero
Executive Director