

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization)	WC Docket No. 11-42
)	
Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service)	CC Docket No. 96-45
)	
Lifeline and Link Up)	WC Docket No. 03-109

**Comments of the American Library Association
Regarding Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization**

The American Library Association (ALA) – the world’s oldest and largest library association, representing over 61,000 members – is pleased to provide comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization.

ALA encourages the inclusion and participation of libraries and library researchers as partners in any pilot program developed to evaluate whether and how Lifeline/Link Up can effectively support broadband adoption by low-income households. Public libraries are trusted community institutions already engaged in significant projects to promote adoption – including public access to computers and connectivity, technology training and outreach to people of all incomes, regions, ages and backgrounds. As such, they would be experienced and thoughtful contributors to any effort to better understand the barriers to adoption and identify success factors for connecting those in greatest danger of missed digital opportunity.

In addition to a broad commitment to technology training and access to online and electronic resources, many libraries sought and received funding through the Sustainable Broadband Adoption (SBA) project category of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). These projects already are engaged in data collection related to their adoption efforts, and many are reaching out to specific vulnerable populations referenced in the NPRM. Libraries also are leveraging Public Computer Centers (PCC) BTOP grants to support hardware, training and applications that improve digital literacy skills and demonstrate the relevancy of broadband for employment, education and social connection.

With the extensive reports (quarterly and annually) these BTOP grantees already are filing, it may be advisable for the Commission to examine findings from these SBA and PCC projects before deciding whether to begin a new round of pilot projects. The NTIA awarded 44 SBA grants and 66 PCC grants; some of these projects have been operating for over one year already. Reviewing the results of these BTOP grants may accelerate the Commission's process for determining what long-term approaches to endorse or fund going forward, as well as further focus any future pilots that may be developed. The collaborative nature of these grant projects also appears to be reflective of the joint effort the Commission proposes in the NPRM (in paragraph 281).

Fast-Forward New Mexico (FFNM), for instance, is a BTOP-funded SBA project that brings together the New Mexico State Library, the University of New Mexico, the Global Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship and the 1st-Mile Institute to increase adoption and promote computer literacy and Internet use. The project provides introductory and intermediate Internet training at libraries in 17 communities across New Mexico, with targeted outreach to Spanish-, Navajo- and Pueblo-language speaking populations. By the end of the year, FFNM had served 577 people and provided 4,475 training hours.¹ Former State Librarian Susan Oberlander shared early findings at the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition BTOP Summit on March 29, 2011. Some of these results are:

- The majority of FFNM students are over 50, are a mix of Anglo, Hispanic and Native American, have no children at home, and are not currently employed;
- Despite town-wide media outreach, 40 percent of all digital literacy students learn about training through the library;
- Enrollment in digital literacy classes greatly exceeded expectations of library directors, who often were initially skeptical that classes would fill;
- Most common reasons for no broadband at home are: no computer, broadband is not available and cost;
- 73 percent of students use computers at their local library, and 42 percent use one at a friend or family member's house;
- Students in basic literacy classes lack skills, but clearly know the value of broadband; and
- Acceptance and support of the FFNM program by community organizations and community leaders is largely attributed to the unique position libraries hold in their communities as a neutral, non-commercial, safe place.²

Other Sustainable Broadband Adoption grantees that include public library participation and leadership include the District of Columbia Government (DC Broadband Education, Training and Adoption), Connected Nation (Public Adoption through Libraries: Every Community Online), City of Chicago (SmartChicago Sustainable Broadband Adoption), The Inland Northwest Community Access Network (Spokane Broadband Technology Alliance), City of Boston (Boston Sustainable Broadband Adoption), and OneCommunity (Connect Your

¹ New Mexico State Library. Annual Performance Progress Report for Sustainable Broadband Adoption. December 2010. <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/grantees/nmstatelibsbaapr2010.pdf>

² American Library Association District Dispatch, April 2011. <http://www.wo.ala.org/districtdispatch/?p=5949>

Community). Many more libraries that were funded under the Public Computer Centers project category also are developing and/or expanding digital literacy efforts.³

In conclusion, the ALA supports data collection and analysis to inform future approaches to providing support for broadband to low-income consumers. Our nation's libraries can and should play an important role in any pilot projects established by the FCC to test and determine the best practices to promote broadband adoption, for the following reasons:

- Ninety-nine percent (99%) of public libraries provide Internet access at no charge to the public. In fact, about 66% of public libraries report they are the *only* provider of free public access to computers and the Internet in their communities.⁴ Public libraries provide access to 207,551 public Internet-use computers.⁵
- Our communities already know and trust the library – public libraries host more than 1.4 billion visits and circulate nearly 2.2 billion items each year.⁶
- 68% of American adults – or 155.5 million people – have a public library card. More than three-quarters of them visited their public libraries in one year.⁷
- Libraries evoke consistent, extraordinary public trust among diverse adult users. Libraries are trusted far more than other sources of information, including government, commercial and private individual Web sites.⁸
- Libraries are uniquely positioned to bring together electronic/print collections (812 million print items, 13 million e-books and 156,000 electronic serial subscriptions),⁹ Internet connection to Web/Internet services, trained staff, and physical meeting space for trainings, classes and public programs.¹⁰

³ A complete list of SBA grants awarded under the BTOP program is available at <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/sustainableadoption>.

⁴ Davis, Denise M., John Carlo Bertot and Charles R. McClure. *Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2009-2010*. Chicago: American Library Association. www.ala.org/plinternetfunding.

⁵ Institute of Museum and Library Services. *Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 2007*. June 2009. http://harvester.census.gov/imls/pubs/pls/pub_detail.asp?id=122

⁶ Institute of Museum and Library Services. *Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 2007*. June 2009. http://harvester.census.gov/imls/pubs/pls/pub_detail.asp?id=122

⁷ American Library Association. "New national poll shows library card registration reaches historic high." Press release, September 2008.

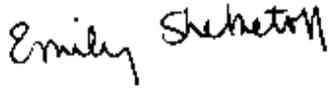
⁸ Griffiths, Jose-Marie and Don King. *Interconnections: The IMLS National Study on the Use of Libraries, Museums and the Internet*. 2008. Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. www.interconnectionsreport.org

⁹ Institute of Museum and Library Services. *Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 2007*. June 2009. http://harvester.census.gov/imls/pubs/pls/pub_detail.asp?id=122

¹⁰ Davis, Denise M., John Carlo Bertot and Charles R. McClure. *Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2009-2010*. Chicago: American Library Association. www.ala.org/plinternetfunding.

- Nearly 90% of public libraries provide formal or informal technology training to library patrons.¹¹

Respectfully submitted by,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Sheketoff". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Emily Sheketoff
Executive Director
ALA Washington Office

¹¹ Ibid.