



Warsaw Community Schools

Warsaw Community Schools
1 Administration Drive, Warsaw, IN 46580
574.371.5098 (phone) 574.371.5095 (fax)

...excelling today and dreaming for tomorrow

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

September 5, 2013

Dear Sir/Madame,

I am writing today in response to the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking which, among other things, proposes changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to first thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

Warsaw Community Schools is located in north central Indiana and though we have a student enrollment of just over 7000 students, we would be considered a rural school district. Of our 7000+ students approximately 50% meet the criteria to be considered for the federal free and reduced lunch program. We are currently using E-Rate dollars to help offset the costs of internet and phone services. As Education continues to move towards an environment of using technology in the classroom we find that our needs to access the "connected" world continues to increase at an alarming pace. Without our E-Rate funding the band width necessary to carry out the educational programs used within the corporation would be severely limited.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this NPRM, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works and that any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential. The current program, while needing some marginal updates to its structure, is most strained by increasing demand for E-Rate-supported services and persistently low funding. The single most effective step the FCC can take to bolster E-Rates current and future success is to provide \$5 billion in funding, an amount commensurate with current demand.

There are additional programmatic changes and restructuring that can provide additional efficiencies and savings. To rely solely on programmatic efficiencies, however, without providing additional new funding is a shortsighted solution, a policy that fails to address the program's most significant problem: inadequate funding.

I think this NPRM is an opportunity to tackle the important work of expanding a successful program. E-Rate is not a broken program that needs to be fixed; it is a successful program that schools and libraries continue to rely on, a program that must continue to provide funding critical for telecommunications and connectivity.

As we look at changes that would be helpful to school corporations such as ours a couple things come to mind. Of course additional funding is always a need. I would be great to be able to increase our bandwidth used for connectivity. Increased bandwidth would allow not only for more, but also faster responses to our student inquiries. As we move our elementary schools in the direction of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) focus the need to access critical learning tools on the internet is of great need. Additional funding would allow the purchase of additional bandwidth to accommodate this need.

Along with additional funding would be the need to streamline the application process used in applying for the program and for the refunds each year. It does require a significant amount of time each year not only to complete the necessary paperwork, but to also keep abreast of the changes made each year to the filing procedures

Thank you for considering my response as you move forward with your decision on the E-Rate program. I applaud the FCC for its continued efforts to protect the already oversubscribed E-Rate program by ensuring the future of this successful program. I urge you to support significant increased funding for the E-Rate program, and to ensure that the program and its limited resources are protected and preserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Stichter", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Stichter
Director of Business Operations
Warsaw Community Schools