



**Dr. Chris Belcher**  
Superintendent

**Dr. Sally Beth Lyon**  
Chief Academic Officer

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

September 4, 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.

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.

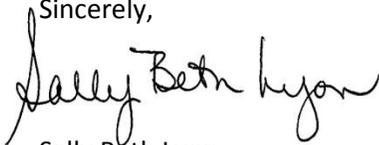
To summarize, Columbia Public Schools offers the following feedback:

- We support this effort provided it comes from the perspective of improving a successful program rather than fixing a broken program.
- The program needs to be continued with a focus on connectivity for schools and libraries, and most importantly, improving connectivity to meet the increased bandwidth demands of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning needs and online testing requirements.
- The biggest obstacle to growth of this program has been available funding for it.

- Our district receives over a quarter million dollars from E-Rate, and that does not include the reduced cost we pay to MOREnet for our 1 gig connection to them. Priority 1 funds are critical to our operation.
- Districts need to remain in control of deciding which services to purchase through E-Rate.
- The application process is confusing and cumbersome, and improvements could be made. We would recommend multi-year application.

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 that reads "Sally Beth Lyon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sally Beth Lyon  
Chief Academic Officer