



Great Falls Public Schools

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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. I urge your continued support of the program as the E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist school districts (like ours) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

Our district is committed to preparing students for the future. In fact, our vision statement is: *All kids engaged in learning today...for life tomorrow.* It is clear that life tomorrow will include technology applications that we can only dream about today. The only way our kids will be prepared for that future will be to provide them with state-of-the-art technology opportunities now. The E-Rate program is helping our district provide that and to prepare our students for that future.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. The funding we have received, as indicated in the chart below, has allowed our student population of just over 10,000 students to enjoy decent bandwidth, but we reach capacity multiple times throughout the school year. The new on-line annual assessments required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will tax our bandwidth capacity during the two-month testing window. There will be no excuses allowed for not meeting this need. E-Rate reimbursement through the E-Rate program is critical for our expansion plans to meet the growing demand for additional bandwidth.

Funding Year	Funding Commitment	Funding Received
2009	\$225,987.44	\$201,285.79
2010	\$145,249.99	\$134,321.25
2011	\$150,116.36	\$148,684.26
2012	\$160,309.21	\$148,654.68
2013	\$158,983.32	TBD

As you can see from our results, E-Rate is over-subscribed and underfunded. Any effort to reduce the amount of E-Rate funding or to change the focus of E-Rate would clearly impact our ability to make our vision come true.

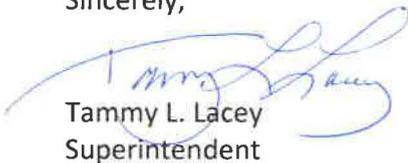
As the FCC moves forward with this NPRM, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works and that any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential. The current program, while needing some marginal 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.

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,



Tammy L. Lacey
Superintendent