



# FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

*"Excellence is not an act, but a habit." – Aristotle*

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

RE: Proposed Changes to the E-Rate Program

Dear Sir or Madam:

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.

Fox Chapel Area School District is made up of six municipalities, which includes an area of about 36 square miles with approximately 30,000 residents. The population represents a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. It is critical for our district to provide a comprehensive array of educational opportunities to serve the needs of this diverse population and meet the high expectations of its residents. Making more effective communications available to all residents, especially school-age children is critical to the mission of the Fox Chapel Area School District.

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.



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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.

Today, having affordable access to 21<sup>st</sup> century broadband is extremely important in our schools. The district has a cyber school and virtual school to meet the needs of varied learners. Our media center has subscribed to on-line libraries which gives our students access to thousands of books beyond the walls of Fox Chapel Area High School and assists in preparing students for college and the world of work.

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. E-Rate is working to help schools maximize the achievement of each child in the Fox Chapel Area School District.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Stephens, Ph.D.  
Superintendent