

As a former active member and chair (2000-2001) of the Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) and a strong advocate for the e-Rate, I am writing to express my support for the public comments filed by EdLiNC. The filing is both forward thinking and practical, while understanding the history and critical role the program plays for students, teachers, schools and libraries.

I believe it is critically important for the Commission as it considers the goals of the administration's ConnectED initiative and possible reforms to the e-Rate, that the Commission not lose sight that the e-Rate is not an education program. Rather the e-Rate is a telecommunications program with an educational benefit.

Considering the focus of the Universal Service authority, the role of the FCC, and the limits to the fund, the Commission should maintain the focus on expanding broadband access, while other resources at the local, state, and federal level are more appropriate venues for regulating and investing in education technology and learning.

I would also like to echo the chorus of filings that have called on the Commission to increase the cap on the e-Rate which has been in place for far too long and is woefully inadequate to meet current and future demand.

The agency must further explore ways to expand the Universal Service Fund fairly without allowing telecommunications companies to simply pass on their corporate responsibilities directly on to consumers and other businesses as increased line item fees. Finally, to the extent new lower cost broadband technology solutions present themselves, the Commission and USAC should actively raise awareness for schools and libraries to consider such solutions as they apply for e-Rate discounts.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critically important program.

Sincerely,

Richard Hershman