

Comments Regarding NPRM to Modernize the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries:

As Network Manager for Troup ISD, I am aware of the continued need and growth necessary for high speed internet bandwidth. Our district promotes and supports digital learning by providing our students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed academically and in the workforce. In addition, we provide students with laptops through our 1:1 program. Each day, our students go online to access educational content and to communicate and collaborate with their peers, teachers and parents. E-Rate funding has helped us to connect our students, teachers and parents.

I write today to urge the Federal Communications Commission to make certain that E-Rate continues to support high speed access and bandwidth to meet the growing needs of our students and districts personnel. Please continue to support critical services such as telecommunications, Internet access, and other related resources. I also request that you strongly consider funding the filtering tools that monitor and make our districts sites safe for our students. I ask that you support raising the program's annual funding level to meet demand for additional bandwidth and to extend cellular/wireless coverage to include areas beyond our school property.

1. Support the Continued Funding for High Speed Access for Internet Transport and Bandwidth

Our district has been able to increase bandwidth and reduce cost by leveraging funding with Erate discounts and sharing bandwidth among member districts through participation in the SuperNet 2 Consortium. This past 18 months, we monitored our usage very closely. We determined the need to increase bandwidth more than 50% compared to the previous years if we were to be able to meet the needs of our district in 21st century teaching and learning practices. I urge you to continue to favorably look at collaborative efforts among consortium memberships for Erate funding.

2. Retain the Eligibility for Support of E-mail, Collaboration Tools and Web Hosting

Consider the support for e-mail, collaboration tools and web hosting. These three services remain the foundation for how students, teachers and parents interact with each other. The SUPERNet Virtual High School uses these tools to support and promote online courses. For our students, collaboration tools allow them to comment on each other's work, collaborate on assignments and transmit research and papers. For our teachers, e-mail and web posting, continues to be the primary sources used to communicate with students and parents. For parents, all three of these services provide them with opportunities to see how their children are performing academically and to discuss critical education issues with their children and their children's teachers.

3. Allow or extend cellular services to include coverage at locations other than school property via cellular data services

While my district is considered urban due to our county designation as a metropolitan area, my district is actually in a very rural location with less than 2000 in population. The Troup ISD is the largest employer in our small community. A large number of our students and a few teachers currently do not have Internet access at home. In order to make full use of instructional resources and the laptops they are provided as part of our 1:1 program, we would urge the FCC to consider extending cellular/Internet eligibility to homes and other locations beyond the regular school day and beyond school property. Homework assignments and collaborative projects often require access to the Internet

and therefore, devices such as MiFi Hotspots or cell phones with data services should be eligible for discounts making it more affordable for districts to provide connectivity & continuity to students and school employees.

Likewise, communication between school personnel, parents, law enforcement agencies, etc...are not limited to a regular school day. This type of contact often times takes place from home, after school hours. Therefore, I urge the FCC to extend its view of Internet access and cellular services to a scope beyond school property. Emergency situations often arise and contact between school, home, district employees, security agencies such as alarm companies, network monitors, etc...often take place via Internet based data services and/or cell contact. It is crucial to the safety of our students and operations of the district for our services to be accessible after school hours and away from school property.

Conversely, I disagree with the idea that schools should become a community hotspot or allow community Internet access. Our district struggles to meet the immediate needs of students and teachers as it stands now. Extending the wireless Internet coverage to the community at large would place a strain on our wireless network and bandwidth. We strive to meet the needs of students and teachers. To add the burden of community access would overtax our personnel and network. The public library and other entities within the community might be a better provider for this service.

4. Support funding for Network and Internet Security Systems required to Filter and Monitor Internet Sites for Student and Teacher Safety

Districts are required to provide safe internet environments, however, in the past these systems have never been eligible for Erate discounts. It would help reduce the stress on our district budget if you would consider offering Erate discounts for these types of software and hardware needs to keep our district site secure and safe for our students and teachers.

5. Raise the E-Rate's Annual Cap

With our need for more bandwidth expected to grow over the next 5 years, I am concerned that we will be unable to meet our future educational needs unless E-Rate funding grows to keep pace. Please consider adding more funds to this important program.