

February 28, 2014

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communication Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Notice of *Ex Parte* Communication, WC Docket No. 13-184

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On February 21, 2014, Richard LaGow and Karen Kahan of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) spoke via telephone with Nick Alexander, Soumitra Das, Chas Eberle, Mark Nadel, David Strickland, Cara Voth, and Mark Walker of the Federal Communications Commission. The purpose of the call was to discuss broadband connectivity and data for Texas K-12 schools. The following topics were discussed.

- *Statewide Structure.* TEA staff explained that Texas is a local control state that allows public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to make their own decisions on how they address their infrastructure and broadband connectivity. The state provides direction to schools through its Long-Range Plan for Technology (LRPT), 2006-2020. The LRPT provides recommendations to various stakeholders in the areas of Teaching and Learning; Educator Preparation and Development; Leadership, Administration, and Instructional Support; and Infrastructure for Technology. The Progress Report on the Long-Range Plan for Technology provides an overview of how the state and schools are meeting the LRPT recommendations. In the 2012 Progress Report's Infrastructure for Technology (Focus Area), there is an overview of the status of broadband connectivity in the state with a reference to the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) broadband targets. Another tool for schools to help gauge progress in meeting the recommendations in the LRPT is the Texas Campus and Teacher School Technology and Readiness (STaR) Charts. Each of these resources is found at www.tea.state.tx.us/technology.

School districts are organized into 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs), regional entities that provide a range of educational, technology, and administrative support services to member districts. Some ESCs provide E-rate consulting, bulk purchasing, and/or act as Internet service providers for member districts. ESCs are primarily funded by member districts but also receive some state funding. Generally speaking, larger districts purchase their own Internet access and wide area network (WAN) connectivity whereas the majority of smaller school districts rely on their ESC.

- *Research & Education Network.* TEA does not have a statewide K-12 broadband network. There is information in the 2012 Progress Report on the Long-Range Plan for Technology that addresses some of the networks available in the state. The Lonestar Research and Education Network (LEARN) is a consortium of higher education institutions, community colleges, K-12 public schools, and the National Weather Service. The Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN) provides video, voice, and data services among the 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs) and the TEA. TETN is housed at ESC 13 in Austin. TETN uses LEARN as the transport vehicle for the network. There are 565 districts and ESCs that connect to TETN.

- *Statewide Data.* TEA does not have statewide data on connectivity or broadband costs. During its 2013 session, the Texas Legislature authorized TEA to conduct a statewide connectivity survey. TEA is in its planning stages to determine how best to collect this data from Texas districts. The legislation authorizing the statewide survey instructs TEA to determine if connectivity in Texas K-12 schools meets specified targets that are consistent with the SETDA connectivity targets cited in the *E-Rate Modernization NPRM*.

- *Misc.*
 - About 40% of Texas's 1,200 school districts have fewer than 500 students and the majority of Texas' 1200 school districts have fewer than 1000 students. (TEA Snapshot 2012 Data)
 - TEA and other states' staff members worked with SETDA on developing its broadband connectivity targets as well as the E-Rate Modernization recommendations and concur with the targets/recommendations.
 - School districts receive an annual Instructional Materials Allotment (IMA) that may be spent on technology services and equipment in addition to instructional materials. IMA information is found at www.tea.state.tx.us/imet.

Respectfully submitted,

 /s/
Charles Eberle

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