



April 7, 2014

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 13-184
Modernizing the E-Rate program for schools and libraries

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the 3,069 counties we represent, we write to urge swift action to improve and modernize the E-Rate program to connect schools and libraries in every county in America with high-speed broadband within the next five years. The E-Rate program has been an instrumental tool for our schools and libraries. Through this program, our county schools and libraries have been able to provide children and county residents with access to the Internet. This type of access is especially important for those who cannot afford Internet access at home.

Ensuring that our schools and libraries have high-speed Internet access is a priority for counties nationwide. In the digital age, we understand and recognize that access to high-speed Internet is critical. Unfortunately, the typical K-12 public school has about the same Internet access speed as the average home – with 200 times more users. It means that 40 million students are being left behind without the speeds they need to take full advantage of digital learning opportunities. We believe that Internet access to the schoolhouse door is insufficient for the digital age. To remain competitive, we must ensure that every child in every classroom has robust access to the Internet. To that end, we believe that the E-Rate program should be modernized, expanded and strengthened by:

1. Increasing bandwidth goals;
2. Streamlining the application process;
3. Focusing funding on broadband by phasing out funding for non-broadband services like paging and voicemail; and
4. Strengthening the buying power of our communities to purchase bandwidth by providing more options.

Counties across America realize the value of connectivity and urge the Commission to take swift action to modernize, expand and strengthen the E-Rate program. Please let us know if NACo can be a resource

as you move forward in this proceeding. We look forward to working with you to modernize and strengthen the E-Rate program for our schools and libraries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew D. Chase". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the top of the first 'M'.

Matthew D. Chase
Executive Director
National Association of Counties

Cc: Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Reilly