

ALA American Library Association

May 13, 2014

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

RE: WC Docket No. 13-184

Dear Secretary Dortch:

On May 5, 2014, the library leaders and staff of the American Library Association listed below met with FCC Chairman Thomas Wheeler; Gigi Sohn, Special Counsel for External Affairs; Jonathan Chambers, Chief, Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis; Jon Wilkins, Managing Director; and Patrick Halley, Associate Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau. In attendance representing the library community:

Carolyn Anthony, Director, Skokie (Illinois) Public Library and President, Public Library Association

Linda Lord, Maine State Librarian and Chair, American Library Association (ALA) E-rate Task Force

Susan McVey, Oklahoma State Librarian

Annie Norman, Delaware State Librarian

Felton Thomas, Executive Director, Cleveland Public Library

Courtney Young, Associate Librarian, Penn State and President-elect, American Library Association

Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director, ALA Washington Office

Alan S. Inouye, Director, ALA Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP)

Marijke Visser, Assistant Director, OITP

Larra Clark, Director, Program on Networks, OITP

Alan Fishel, Senior Counsel, OITP; and Partner, Arent Fox

Mary Hirsh, Project Manager, Public Library Association

During the meeting the following topics were discussed:

ALA proposed that the Commission invest a significant portion of the \$2 billion down payment such that the Commission take advantage of a “two-for one” approach to expending these funds. To both move a significant portion of library and school applicants toward the Commission’s capacity goal, and to ensure the sustainability of the overall fund, ALA proposes that the down payment be

used to focus on improving current processes and incenting applicants to take advantage of capacity building measures already in place through program.

Ms. Young opened the meeting describing the diversity of the library community stating that libraries are located throughout the country in both urban and rural communities and as such have diverse needs but actively support education, employment and entrepreneurship in their communities.

Ms. Lord and Mr. Thomas discussed the critical role libraries play in supporting education. Ms. Lord described the Maine Connections Academy, a virtual public charter school some of whose students will undoubtedly use Maine public libraries to take courses and find resources. She also described a program underway through the leadership of the Maine State Library and funding from the Department of Health and Human Services to hire an early childhood specialist to work via video conference and on site with Maine librarians for professional development on pre-literacy and brain development of young children. Libraries in Maine are key to preparing young children and their families for school readiness. Mr. Thomas described how libraries support education needs in an urban setting. Specifically, he described Ohio's "Third Grade Reading Guarantee" that the Ohio Governor backed to address the 75 percent third graders in Cleveland that failed Ohio's proficiency test and would not move forward to the fourth grade. Cleveland Public Library will support these students through traditional tutoring as well as through a host of multimedia and online tutoring services. Mr. Thomas described library support for the non-traditional students where the library will merge with a non-profit to provide GED training and testing in the library. This is especially important as the GED tests are now only online.

Dr. Norman discussed the Delaware state-wide network through which all Delaware libraries are at 100 Mbps though she predicts they will need 1 Gbps as soon as 2015. Delaware libraries are critical for the health of its economy and support employment and entrepreneurship for its residents through job centers and "inspiration spaces." In addition to supporting education, employment and entrepreneurship, Delaware libraries add two more Es: "Efficiencies and Economies of Scale Savings" through their state-wide approach. Dr. Norman provided information about the initiative as well as a TV whitespace project the libraries are able to undertake given the 100 Mbps connection. Through this project, every library will have a device that broadcasts broadband within a radius of the libraries so that virtually the entire state would be covered with broadband access. Dr. Norman provided the FCC with three handouts describing Delaware library services and a map collocating libraries and chicken houses for the TV whitespace project. These are also filed in this Docket.

Ms. Anthony explained how the Skokie (Illinois) Public Library empowers and engages the community, especially for the 43 percent foreign born population where the majority of the school aged children speak a language at home other than English. The Skokie Public Library current shares a 500 Mbps fiber connection with two high schools and five separate elementary school districts. The high school district is the e-rate applicant for funds that support connection with the Illinois backbone and the municipality arranged for fiber between all the schools and the library as a requirement for a cable franchise agreement. Our situation demonstrates how schools and libraries can work together and how libraries may benefit although they do not show as the applicant for e-rate funds.

Despite access to this high-speed capacity, Ms. Anthony would like to increase that capacity to 1 Gbps in the near future to support services such as the digital media labs that are critical in supporting informal learning experiences. The library is open 7 days a week for 75 hours and is critical in supporting the 15 percent of high school students without home internet access and the 30 percent of elementary students without such access.

Ms. McVey described recent upgrades for some of Oklahoma's libraries that brought 44 non-metropolitan public libraries up from a 1.5 Mbps connection to at least a 10 Mbps connection and in some instances up to 100 Mbps. These libraries are heavily used for, among other things, continuing education for healthcare professionals as well as being a remote site for a Masters in School Administration program. These libraries also support a significant need for health support services related to chronic disease management. For example, their family members of stroke survivors to use the library to be part of an online support group and the stroke patients themselves access critical information for managing their care through videoconferencing at their local library. In addition to empowering these families, Ms. McVey also discussed an effort to preserve native languages using videoconferencing to allow fluent speakers to provide instruction to multiple sites removing the need to travel by usually elderly instructors. Finally Ms. McVey mentioned a school group that used the library in planning for an exchange with its sister city in Japan. Prior to the exchange, students used the library's videoconference technology to "get to know" the students in Japan and to virtually tour the onsite visit.

These and the previous examples described by state librarians and the library directors emphasize *The E's of Libraries*TM which categorize the host of library services, including those focused on education, employment and entrepreneurship as well as those that empower individuals and foster community engagement. The services enumerated above are representative of the lifeline libraries provide their communities—especially for those without an alternative for internet access—and are 100 percent dependent on high capacity, scalable broadband.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,



Marijke Visser
Assistant Director, Office for Information Technology Policy
American Library Association
Washington Office