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June 16, 2014

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) and our network of community partners across California, I want to thank you for your leadership to address E-Rate modernization. We also urge you to address the need for affordable broadband access for low-income residents, especially for students from low-income families attending low-performing schools in urban poor and rural communities. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sits at a pivotal moment in time when the opportunity exists to ensure that all schools and residents in the country have access to 21st century technology and the country reaffirms its commitment to being globally competitive, or the nation acquiesces to leaving behind a full quarter of our population who will be relegated to being permanently disadvantaged.

As per our filing on February 12, 2014 and April 7, 2014, we urge the FCC to take the opportunity during the course of the E-Rate modernization proceedings to advance the need to improve academic performance as a result of increased investment in education technology. We know first-hand and have documented through our School2Home program the ability of broadband and computing technologies to turn around low-performing schools and improve academic performance. Access to broadband and computing technologies not only provides students in poor and rural communities with the tools and skills to succeed in school but they also provide the connectivity for their parents to be engaged in their education. Attached is a summary of the CETF position on E-Rate. We also want to invite you to visit a School2Home site in the future.

In addition to E-Rate modernization, it is imperative that the FCC ensure affordable broadband rates broadly available across the nation for all low-income students and households. However, the FCC pilots on broadband lifeline are proceeding very slowly and are not likely to result in significant action in the near future. However, corporate acquisitions and consolidations present the opportunity to secure commitments to acceptable performance on existing affordable broadband offers and to level the playing field by requiring all merged companies to make available similar offers. The confluence of events and the evolution of the telecommunications-broadband industries call upon the FCC to forge a fair communications future and equal digital opportunity for all.

Sincerely,

Sunne Wright McPeak

Sunne Wright McPeak
President and CEO