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Sample FCC "comment" box text As an educator, I am concerned with the proposed plan that shifts a portion of E-rate discounts to a per-pupil funding allocation hurting the very students the E-rate Program is targeted to help.

I am also concerned that while there are funds for the first two years of a five-year plan, funds needed for the last three years have not been identified – leaving no choice but to raid critical funding from another part of the E-rate Program.

#### BACKGROUND ON PROPOSED E-RATE PLAN

##### FCC's Proposal :

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is proposing changing access to internal connections under the E-rate Program\* with a plan that costs \$5 billion over five years for Wi-Fi connections to be allocated via a per-pupil formula. NEA's Concerns:

Shifting a portion of E-rate discounts to a per-pupil allocation diminishes the Program's ability to support schools whose costs for internet connectivity and Wi-Fi equipment are higher because of their rural locale or greater concentration of poverty – further exacerbating the digital divide. While there is funding for the first two years of the plan, the \$3 billion needed for the last three years has not been identified – leaving no choice but to raid funds from another part of the E-rate Program. \*E-rate Program

Enacted by the U.S. Telecommunications Act of 1996, the E-rate Program provides discounts to schools and public libraries for monthly expenses for telecommunications and internet connectivity and for internal connections within schools such as Wi-Fi. Capped at \$2.25 billion since 1998, with a nominal adjustment for inflation starting in 2010, the Program's overwhelming success at connecting schools and libraries to the Internet has been thwarted by chronic underfunding. Annual demand for E-rate discounts has outpaced funding available since the Program's inception. Last year's demand was more than double the funds available. Essentially "rearranging the deck chairs" by shifting to a per-pupil allocation does not address the chronic underfunding of the E-rate Program and will not help us meet President Obama's goal of ensuring 99% of schools have sufficient high-speed broadband connectivity to the Internet within five years. COMMENTS:

Add Your Comment

Name

Comment

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