

July 3, 2014

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner Rosenworcel, Commissioner Pai, and Commissioner O'Reilly:

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has supported the E-rate program since its inception and we have commented on many E-rate reform notices, including the comprehensive rulemaking notice of July 2013.¹

Today I am specifically writing in support of the proposed reforms that will be part of an E-rate Order placed before the Commission at your July 11 meeting. Let me state my strong support for the Order's focus on internal connections, and more specifically wi-fi access in our schools and libraries. I must note that with the exception of the Milwaukee Public Schools, approximately 90 percent of Wisconsin's public school districts and 99 percent of our public libraries have received *no funding* for internal connections since 1999. I am pleased – as I know our schools and libraries are – that this Order will finally address this long-standing funding inequity. While I do not have exact figures, it appears our schools and libraries will be eligible for about \$130 million more in E-rate funds over the next five years under this revised internal connections funding allocation. It is a huge understatement to say that this funding is greatly appreciated and desperately needed.

I also applaud the other reforms that will be addressed in the Order. For example, each year Wisconsin submits one of the nation's largest consortium applications, which includes broadband access on our state's BadgerNet network for 930 schools and libraries. Unfortunately, this application is often subject to endless review and frequently is not funded for months past the July 1 start of the funding year. Thus, the commitment in this pending Order to streamline the consortium application and review process is particularly welcome. Another reform we support is an expedited process for requests made for a relatively modest amount of funding (in 2013 sixty-four percent of all Wisconsin funding requests were for less than \$5,000). This reform will be of particular benefit to our smaller schools and libraries. In addition, we support eliminating the technology plan requirement for Priority 2 services. While we certainly think all schools and libraries should have such plans, we are opposed to have them be an E-rate mandate and have their content defined at the federal level.

¹ *In the Matter of Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries*. Comments from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. WC Docket 13-184. (Filed September 15, 2013; <http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7520943611>.)

Federal Communications Commission

Page Two

July 3, 2014

It is my understanding this July Order will not address the chronic underfunding of the program, nor will it focus to any great degree on the need for our schools and libraries to have adequate broadband at affordable costs. However, it is also my understanding this Order is just the first step in the E-rate reform process and the Commission will likely address these two critical issues – as well as other reforms – in a future Order possibly to be issued within the next 6 to 8 months. There is most definitely a need to address these still pending issues.

In conclusion, I support this proposed Order as a first step to bring the E-rate program into the 21st century and I look forward to working with the Commission and other stakeholders to continue the E-rate reform process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kurt J. Kiefer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "J".

Kurt J. Kiefer

Assistant State Superintendent

cc: Ann Joslin, President, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies

Evan Marwell, CEO, EducationSuperHighway

Doug Levin, Executive Director, State Educational Technology Directors Association