



CITY OF HOUSTON

Library Department

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July 2, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Chairman and Commissioners:

The e-rate program is a vital part of delivering equitable access to the many low to moderate income citizens in the Houston Public Library service area. As the largest library in the state of Texas and 7th largest in the country, the Houston Public Library provides over 300 public access computers for its customers. In FY13, we had over 1.1 million computer users, over 2.7 million Wi-Fi users, and over 3 million internet visitors. Our Wi-Fi users continue to grow and we suspect that this will outpace our wired users by four to one over the next year. Citizens are waiting in line for our libraries to open their doors so they can have access. All of our computers, wired and wireless are used all day every day. Providing this volume of access to technology was made possible because of the e-rate program. One can see that we are definitely fulfilling a vital need in our community.

HPL serves as a vital point of access to technology, technology instruction, and electronic resources. We help strengthen the workforce by providing citizens' access and use of online employment resources, including job searches, creating resumes, and submitting employment applications. All of this is made possible because of the 70-90% discounts we receive through the e-rate program. Last year alone, we saved over \$2.1 million because of the e-rate program.

We have been asked a couple of questions about our technology and e-rate program:

- How much does it cost HPL to provide wired and wireless internet access to our customers?
- What is our view about using square footage to determine e-rate funding?

It costs us over \$2.3 million every year for services and contracts on our technology environment. We will spend close to \$2.5 million on hardware equipment for our wired and wireless environment over five years. HPL has 44 locations with a total of 919,000 square feet. I understand the FCC is proposing to use a \$1 per square feet to support Wi-Fi in public libraries. This amount would be woefully inadequate for us to support the environment that we have today. We are in a highly urban area and our locations are packed most of the day. The proposed model would inappropriately impact urban libraries over suburban or rural libraries. We proposed that the funding models should be:

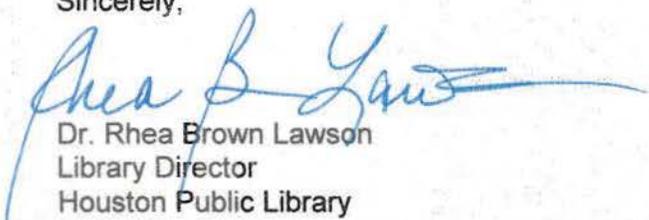
- \$4-5 per square feet
- \$150 per average daily visitor

Please note that we are in support of all types of libraries receiving the proper funding they need to provide services to their customers. We want to make sure that urban libraries continue to provide the valuable service to the public that they offer today.

On behalf of the library community, we ask for your continued support of this valuable and needed program. These discounts greatly facilitate the ability of libraries nationwide to support the millions of citizens who depend on libraries as their only access point to technology.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to the citizens of this great country.

Sincerely,



Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson
Library Director
Houston Public Library