

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Request for Review and/or Waiver of Decision of	)	
the Universal Service Administrator by	)	
	)	
Child Development Resources of Ventura County,	)	Application No. ECF202113179
Inc.,	)	
Oxnard, CA	)	
	)	
Establishing Emergency Connectivity Fund to	)	WC Docket No. 21-93
Close the Homework Gap	)	
	)	

**ORDER**

**Adopted: February 10, 2026**

**Released: February 10, 2026**

By the Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau:

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. In this Order, we deny a request for review and/or waiver filed by Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc. (Child Development Resources) regarding an Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) program decision.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) denied a request for reimbursement and a subsequent appeal of the denial for a number of reasons, including for seeking reimbursement for over 1,500 Wi-Fi hotspots that had not been used. Child Development Resources now seeks review and/or a waiver of the ECF program rules. We deny the request, finding that denial of the reimbursement was appropriate and that Child Development Resources has not demonstrated special circumstances necessary to justify a waiver of the ECF program rules.

**II. BACKGROUND**

2. As part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Act), Congress appropriated \$7.171 billion and directed the Commission to promulgate rules for distributing funding from the ECF to eligible schools and libraries for the purchase of eligible equipment and/or advanced telecommunications and information services, including Wi-Fi hotspots, for use by students, school staff, and library patrons for remote learning at locations that include locations other than a school or library.<sup>2</sup> On May 10, 2021, the Commission adopted the *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order* establishing rules for the ECF

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<sup>1</sup> Request for Review and/or Waiver of Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc., WC Docket No. 21-93 (filed June 30, 2025), <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/search/search-filings/filing/10630895405437> (Request for Review and/or Waiver).

<sup>2</sup> American Rescue Plan Act, 2021, H.R. 1319, Pub. L. No. 117-2, 117<sup>th</sup> Cong., tit. VII, § 7402(a)(1)-(2) (2021) (enacted), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319/text> (American Rescue Plan Act) (enrolled bill).

program to distribute the funding to eligible schools and libraries.<sup>3</sup>

3. The Commission and USAC opened three application filing windows, during which applicants could request funding for eligible equipment and services received or delivered during the applicable funding periods.<sup>4</sup> On May 11, 2023, the COVID-19 public health emergency expired, triggering the sunset date of June 30, 2024 for the ECF program.<sup>5</sup> All ECF purchases of eligible equipment and services had to be completed by this date.<sup>6</sup>

4. Pursuant to the *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, ECF program funding was limited to requests for eligible equipment and services to meet the unmet needs of students, school staff, and library patrons that otherwise lacked access to equipment and/or Internet access services sufficient to engage in remote learning during the COVID-19 emergency period.<sup>7</sup> The Commission adopted a maximum support amount of \$250 for Wi-Fi hotspots, but explained that reimbursement would be based on the actual costs of the equipment.<sup>8</sup> Applicants were also required to certify to unmet need as part of their funding application – specifically that they were only seeking support for equipment or services provided to students and school staff who would otherwise lack access to connected devices or broadband services sufficient to engage in remote learning.<sup>9</sup> Eligible school staff is limited to staff who were “providing . . . educational services during the relevant time periods [who] would otherwise lack access to . . . broadband connections sufficient to facilitate remote learning during the pandemic.”<sup>10</sup> Due to the emergency nature of the program, applicants were permitted to request ECF support based on estimates of unmet need, but they were only permitted to request reimbursement for services or equipment that fulfilled an actual unmet need.<sup>11</sup> For school districts that provide devices through 1:1 device initiatives to all students regardless of need, the Commission limited support to the purchase of devices or services for students that did not have access to an adequate device.<sup>12</sup> Finally, applicants and

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<sup>3</sup> See generally *Establishing the Emergency Connectivity Fund to Close the Homework Gap*, WC Docket No. 21-93, Report and Order, 36 FCC Rcd 8696 (2021) (*Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*).

<sup>4</sup> See 47 CFR § 54.1710; *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8734, 8737, paras. 78, 83.

<sup>5</sup> See *Wireline Competition Bureau and Office of the Managing Director Provide Guidance on Emergency Connectivity Fund Program Upon Termination of the Emergency Period*, WC Docket No. 21-93, Public Notice, 38 FCC Rcd 4282, 4284 (WCB 2023) (*ECF Sunset Public Notice*); see also H.R. 1319, tit. VII, § 7402(d)(5)(B).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> See *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8736-37, para. 81.

<sup>8</sup> 47 CFR § 54.1707(a); see also *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8731, para. 69; see also *Emergency Connectivity Fund FAQs*, Question 5.10, <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund-faqs> (last visited Feb. 10, 2026) (explaining that the reimbursement amount is based on the actual or market-based cost of the requested equipment and not the \$400 or \$250 reasonable support amount and that the request for reimbursement may be reduced or denied if it is determined to be unreasonable).

<sup>9</sup> 47 CFR § 54.1710(a)(1)(vii); see also *Emergency Connectivity Fund FAQs*, Question 6.12, <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund-faqs> (last visited Feb. 10, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> See *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8729, para. 63.

<sup>11</sup> See generally *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8704, para. 18; see also *Emergency Connectivity Fund FAQs*, Question 6.1 (outlining how applicants may estimate unmet needs).

<sup>12</sup> See *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8736, n.229 (addressing 1:1 initiatives that provide devices to all students regardless of need and stating that the Commission did not find “it appropriate to support the purchase of devices or services for students that already have access to an adequate device”); see also *Emergency Connectivity Fund FAQs*, Question 6.12, <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund-faqs> (last visited Feb. 10, 2026) (stating that applicants cannot request funding for all students as part of a 1:1 initiative and must only seek support for students and school staff who lacked access to connected devices or services).

service providers submitting requests for reimbursement were required to certify that they were “not willfully or knowingly requesting reimbursement for equipment or services that are not being used.”<sup>13</sup>

5. Child Development Resources filed an ECF funding application on August 12, 2021 seeking support for 1,502 Wi-Fi hotspots at a cost of \$249.99 each, along with 12 months of service, for pre-kindergarten students and staff in its Head Start centers.<sup>14</sup> USAC issued a funding commitment on March 7, 2022 for the two requests.<sup>15</sup> The service provider, The Cost Cutters, then submitted two requests for reimbursement in the amounts of \$375,484.98 for Wi-Fi hotspots and \$83,060.60 for services.<sup>16</sup> During review of the invoices, USAC sent outreach to Child Development Resources to verify unmet needs, request information about the service provider, and determine whether the request was for a 1:1 device initiative. The two reimbursement requests were denied on October 17, 2024.<sup>17</sup> Child Development Resources appealed the Wi-Fi hotspot related decision to USAC on November 14, 2024.<sup>18</sup> USAC denied the appeal, stating that Child Development Resources did not justify the cost of the Wi-Fi hotspots as reasonable, did not show how unmet needs were determined, nor demonstrate that the devices were not part of a 1:1 device initiative, and finally, Child Development Resources made clear that the Wi-Fi hotspots had never been connected to a mobile service and thus, had not been used by students or school staff.<sup>19</sup>

6. Child Development Resources now seeks timely review and/or waiver of USAC’s appeal decision with the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau).<sup>20</sup> It states first that its “outreach and needs assessment conducted via informal family services surveys identified students without home internet as part of our 1:1 device initiative.”<sup>21</sup> Second, it says that the cost of the Wi-Fi hotspots “represents a good-faith, reasonable expenditure” in light of the public health emergency and supply chain disruptions that resulted in a “a sharp increase in the cost of hardware.”<sup>22</sup> Third, it states that the intended use was to support students and teaching staff, and that it required additional time to develop a compliant distribution plan.<sup>23</sup> It also provides a future deployment plan for the Wi-Fi hotspots with its request.<sup>24</sup> In the alternative, it asks for a waiver of the Commission’s rules because it is in the public interest to reinstate

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<sup>13</sup> 47 CFR § 54.1711(a)(1)(viii) and (a)(2)(vi).

<sup>14</sup> ECF Application No. ECF202113179, Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc. Head Start, (Aug. 12, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> See Letter from USAC, to Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc. Head Start, concerning ECF Application No. ECF202113179 (Mar. 7, 2022) (Funding Commitment Decision Letter).

<sup>16</sup> See FCC Form 474 Request for Reimbursement SPI202308189 (Oct. 11, 2023) (Hotspots Invoice); FCC Form 474 Request for Reimbursement SPI202308190 (Oct. 11, 2023) (Services Invoice).

<sup>17</sup> See Reimbursement Decision Batch Number ECF-IN-FY2024.21 (Oct. 17, 2024) (denying the hotspots and services invoices).

<sup>18</sup> Request for Review of Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc., to USAC (Nov. 14, 2024) (USAC Appeal). Child Development Resources informed USAC it was not appealing the decision regarding services.

<sup>19</sup> See Letter from USAC, to Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc. Head Start, concerning ECF Application No. ECF202113179 (June 4, 2025) (Revised Funding Commitment Decision Letter).

<sup>20</sup> Request for Review and/or Waiver.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* at 2-3.

the ECF support due to the impact of the denial of funds on the children and families in the region.<sup>25</sup>

### III. DISCUSSION

7. We deny Child Development Resources' request for review. First and foremost, Child Development Resources made clear in its communications with USAC that it had not used the Wi-Fi hotspots.<sup>26</sup> ECF participants may not seek reimbursement for equipment and/or services that are not being used,<sup>27</sup> and as such, reimbursement for the Wi-Fi hotspots that had never been provided with a mobile service, and could not be used is a violation of program rules.<sup>28</sup>

8. While the non-usage of the Wi-Fi hotspots is sufficient for denial, we also briefly note additional flaws in Child Development Resources' ECF request and its request for review. First, the applicant did not provide sufficient evidence that the \$249.99 cost of the Wi-Fi hotspots was reasonable, nor that it represented the actual costs of the equipment.<sup>29</sup> ECF participants were required to be able to explain their selections and costs to determine reasonability beyond simply providing an invoice and mentioning supply chain issues.<sup>30</sup> Under Bureau guidance, USAC could look to pricing for other similar equipment requested in the ECF program, as well as research public information.<sup>31</sup> The average cost of Wi-Fi hotspots funded through the ECF program in Windows 1 and 2 during this time period was \$107.80 per hotspot,<sup>32</sup> and a review of the hotspot at issue from June 2020, listed a \$90 manufacturer's suggested retail price, which is just over a third of the cost Child Development Resources sought in 2021 and 2022 in these funding requests.<sup>33</sup> In sum, Child Development Resources did not explain the reasonableness of the requested \$249.99 cost.<sup>34</sup> Second, Child Development Resources failed to provide evidence of how it determined unmet need for an Internet connection amongst its pre-kindergarten students and its school staff. In requesting 1,502 Wi-Fi hotspots for 1,294 enrolled pre-kindergarten students<sup>35</sup> and 208 staff, the request appears to be part of 1:1 device initiative with no evidence that a

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<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>26</sup> Initially, Child Development Resources stated as part of its USAC Appeal that it was "not requesting reimbursement for [the services] FRN." After USAC sought to confirm this information, Child Development Resources replied that "We received the hotspots without service and only realized this upon distribution." *See* Response to USAC from Child Development Resources (filed Mar. 18, 2025).

<sup>27</sup> 47 CFR § 54.1711(a)(2)(vi).

<sup>28</sup> *See* 47 CFR § 54.1711(a)(1)(viii) and (a)(2)(vi).

<sup>29</sup> *See, e.g., Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8731, para. 69.

<sup>30</sup> *See id.* at 8732, para. 72.

<sup>31</sup> *See, e.g., Emergency Connectivity Fund FAQs*, Question 5.10, <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund-faqs> (last visited Feb. 10, 2026) (explaining that the reimbursement amount is based on the actual or market-based cost of the requested equipment and not the \$400 or \$250 reasonable support amount and that the request for reimbursement may be reduced or denied if it is determined to be unreasonable).

<sup>32</sup> *See* Universal Service Administrative Company, Emergency Connectivity Fund FCC Form 471, <https://opendata.usac.org/Emergency-Connectivity-Fund/Emergency-Connectivity-Fund-FCC-Form-471/i5j4-3rvr> (last visited Feb. 10, 2026) (reporting data on Wi-Fi hotspot devices and services that have been requested in the ECF program).

<sup>33</sup> *See* Sascha Segan, *Alcatel LinkZone 2 Review: An affordable hotspot, but far from fast*, PCMag.com (June 11, 2020), <https://www.pcmag.com/reviews/alcatel-linkzone-2#>.

<sup>34</sup> For example, applicants and/or service providers should provide evidence that the price of the device at the time it was purchased, rather than requested, was higher than normal, or cost comparisons that include similar or identical features.

<sup>35</sup> In its appeal to USAC, the enrolled population was stated as 1,072. *See* USAC Appeal.

survey or other determination of need for Wi-Fi hotspots was conducted.<sup>36</sup> In correspondence with USAC, it also appears that Child Development Resources included many non-teaching school staff in its staff recipient list<sup>37</sup> while only teachers and assistant teachers (with unmet need) providing educational services are eligible for a Wi-Fi hotspot through the ECF program.<sup>38</sup> Child Development Resources makes clear through its “Updated Deployment Plan,” included with its request for review, that surveys to determine actual need would be conducted in the future, well beyond the funding period of these funding requests and the June 30, 2024 sunset of the Emergency Connectivity Fund program.<sup>39</sup>

9. We also deny Child Development Resources’ request for a waiver. Generally, the Commission’s rules may be waived for good cause shown.<sup>40</sup> The Commission may exercise its discretion to waive a rule where the particular facts make strict compliance inconsistent with the public interest.<sup>41</sup> Child Development Resources states that granting a waiver is in the public interest, “as denial of these funds directly impacts vulnerable children and families in our region.”<sup>42</sup> The Commission has consistently held that the assertion of financial need of the applicant and the detrimental impact a denial of support will have on the students who make use of the services does not meet the requirement of special circumstances that warrant a waiver of the Commission’s rules.<sup>43</sup> In addition, we find that it is not in the public interest to waive the Commission’s rules when there is evidence that the requested Wi-Fi hotspots were never used.<sup>44</sup> Child Development Resources does not otherwise demonstrate any special circumstances that warrant deviation from the ECF program rules, and therefore, we deny the request for a waiver.

#### IV. ORDERING CLAUSES

10. ACCORDINGLY, IT IS ORDERED, pursuant to the authority contained in sections 1-4

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<sup>36</sup> See also Request for Review and/or Waiver at 1 (stating that their needs assessment of students without home internet was part of its 1:1 device initiative).

<sup>37</sup> USAC Appeal (suggesting that 230 staff were eligible, including Classroom Aides, Site Supervisors, Health & Nutrition Coordinators as potential recipients of the ECF-requested Wi-Fi hotspots).

<sup>38</sup> See *Emergency Connectivity Fund Report and Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 8729, para. 63; Emergency Connectivity Fund FAQs, Question 4.1, <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund-faqs> (last visited Feb. 10, 2026) (explaining that only school staff, such as teachers and para-professionals, that provide educational services to students are eligible to receive ECF-funded equipment and services).

<sup>39</sup> Request for Review and/or Waiver at 2.

<sup>40</sup> 47 CFR § 1.3.

<sup>41</sup> *Northeast Cellular Telephone Co. v. FCC*, 897 F.2d 1164, 1166 (D.C. Cir. 1990).

<sup>42</sup> Request for Review and/or Waiver at 3.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., *Application for Review of a Decision of the Wireline Competition Bureau by Mescalero Apache School; Schools and Libraries Universal Support Mechanism*, CC Docket No. 02-6, Order, 20 FCC Rcd 5848, 5850, para. 5 (2005); *Request for Review by Northern Waters Library Service, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, Changes to the Board of Directors of the National Exchange Carrier Association, Inc.*, CC Docket Nos. 96-45 and 97-21, Order, 17 FCC Rcd 1756, para. 7 (CCB 2002) (finding that financial need does not meet the requirement of special circumstances that warrant a waiver of the Commission’s rules).

<sup>44</sup> See *supra* para. 7 and note 26 (explaining that the Wi-Fi hotspots did not include an associated mobile service and the devices therefore could not be used); see also, e.g., *Request for Review of Decisions of the Universal Service Administrator by Joseph M. Hill Trustee in Bankruptcy for Lakehills Consulting, LP; Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism*, CC Docket No. 02-6, Order, 26 FCC Rcd 16586, 16602, para 30 (2011) (*Lakehills Order*) (finding that it is not in the public interest to waive the Commission’s rules when there is evidence of waste).

and 254 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 151-154 and 254, and sections 0.91, 0.291, 1.3, 54.1710(a)(1)(vii); and 54.1711(a)(2)(vi) of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR §§ 0.91, 0.291, 1.3, 54.1710(a)(1)(vii); and 54.1711(a)(2)(vi), that the Request for Review and/or Waiver filed by Child Development Resources of Ventura County, Inc., filed June 30, 2025, IS DENIED.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Joseph S. Calascione  
Chief  
Wireline Competition Bureau