



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

July 25, 2014

The Honorable Michael Bennet  
United States Senate  
458 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Thank you for sharing your views on the importance of modernizing the E-rate program to provide high-speed broadband to and within all of our nation's schools and libraries. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

Since its creation as part of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, the E-rate program has provided crucial support to meet the connectivity needs of schools and libraries. But just as technology and teaching have evolved over the past two decades, so, too, must E-rate. The tools that supported the educational needs of the Class of 1998 bear virtually no resemblance to those the Classes of 2015 and beyond need to succeed in the 21st century.

As part of the Commission's E-rate modernization effort, I am committed to ensuring that the E-rate program evolves to focus on providing support for the high-speed broadband both to and within schools and libraries. Schools need this broadband to take advantage of digital learning technologies, and libraries need to provide their patrons with high-speed access to the Internet. As you note in your letter, "we need to keep pace with the growing potential of today's digital learning technologies." I could not agree more.

The *Order* adopted by the Commission at our July Open Meeting takes significant steps to modernize the E-rate program by addressing the Wi-Fi gap in America's schools and libraries. We established an annual funding target of \$1 billion for Wi-Fi and a more fair method for distributing funds so that *all* schools and libraries can benefit, including far more rural schools and libraries than in the past. Given that 40 percent of classrooms are not currently Wi-Fi-enabled, and nearly two-thirds of schools indicate that they do not have sufficient Wi-Fi capacity to meet their digital learning needs, it is critically important that we focus our limited program resources on connectivity, not just *to* the school or library, but to the student or library patron. The *Order* funds this support for Wi-Fi through the combination of funds already available for this purpose and by utilizing savings associated with transitioning support from non-broadband services to broadband. At the same time, the *Order* ensures that adequate funding will also be available for broadband connectivity to schools and libraries and seeks further comment on the long-term funding needs of the program.

Your letter also emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability. I am happy to report that, to make E-rate dollars go even further, the *Order* adopts transparency measures to provide applicants with the pricing and connectivity data needed to make smart purchasing decisions, encourages consortia purchasing to drive down prices, and ensures that applicants are selecting from the best possible bids through the lowest corresponding price rule.

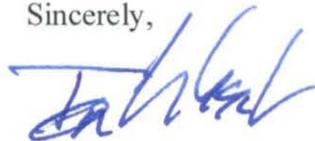
Finally, consistent with the priorities set forth in your letter, the *Order* makes several changes to help make the E-rate processes faster, simpler, and more efficient for all stakeholders. It streamlines the application process by simplifying review of multi-year contracts, expediting small dollar, cost-effective applications, speeding review of all applications, requiring electronic filing, and enabling direct connections between schools and libraries.

The *Order* is a common sense, responsible step in the E-rate modernization process. We are targeting already available funds to meet the greatest current needs, we are getting as much as we can out of every E-rate dollar, and we are formally and expeditiously investigating the appropriate funding level for this program, based upon the steps we have taken to improve its structure and administration. But there is still more work to do.

E-rate modernization is one of the most important issues before the Commission today. We have an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of millions of students. I look forward to working with you and your colleagues toward our mutual goal of increased access to high-speed broadband in our nation's schools and libraries.

Thank you again for your interest in this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further concerns.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

July 25, 2014

The Honorable Johnny Isakson  
United States Senate  
131 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Isakson:

Thank you for sharing your views on the importance of modernizing the E-rate program to provide high-speed broadband to and within all of our nation's schools and libraries. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

Since its creation as part of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, the E-rate program has provided crucial support to meet the connectivity needs of schools and libraries. But just as technology and teaching have evolved over the past two decades, so, too, must E-rate. The tools that supported the educational needs of the Class of 1998 bear virtually no resemblance to those the Classes of 2015 and beyond need to succeed in the 21st century.

As part of the Commission's E-rate modernization effort, I am committed to ensuring that the E-rate program evolves to focus on providing support for the high-speed broadband both to and within schools and libraries. Schools need this broadband to take advantage of digital learning technologies, and libraries need to provide their patrons with high-speed access to the Internet. As you note in your letter, "we need to keep pace with the growing potential of today's digital learning technologies." I could not agree more.

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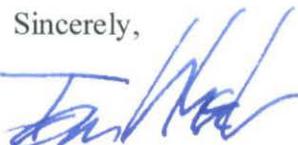
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E-rate modernization is one of the most important issues before the Commission today. We have an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of millions of students. I look forward to working with you and your colleagues toward our mutual goal of increased access to high-speed broadband in our nation's schools and libraries.

Thank you again for your interest in this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further concerns.

Sincerely,  
  
Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

July 25, 2014

The Honorable Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senate  
188 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator King:

Thank you for sharing your views on the importance of modernizing the E-rate program to provide high-speed broadband to and within all of our nation's schools and libraries. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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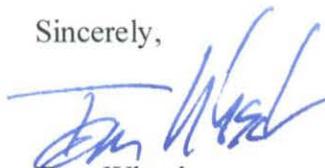
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Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler