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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

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February 8, 2017

96

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I am writing to express my concerns about your decision late last Friday to retract, set aside, and rescind a staff-level “E-Rate Modernization Progress Report.”

Your unilateral action last week to quash a staff report providing an analysis and progress report of the agency’s E-Rate modernization efforts shows a troubling disinterest in the facts. The facts are these: the revitalized E-Rate program is now connecting more schools and libraries in every state with faster and better broadband. More students in more places, including in more rural areas, can now get access to the tools they need for a digital education, which is essential if our nation’s students are to compete in the 21st century economy. Today’s E-Rate is a student-centered program that remains critical to the future of education and the economy in the United States.

The fact that you directed three bureaus to issue a formal order to retract, set aside, and rescind a staff report was extraordinary. You also declared that the report was “controversial” and made clear that it would have no “effect or meaning going forward.” Such actions are deeply disturbing to our nation’s schools and libraries and those of us in Congress who are their allies in support of the E-Rate program.

As FCC Chairman, you are now the steward of the E-Rate program. It is without question the single most important educational technology program in the country. Our nation’s students, teachers, and librarians—and this senator—will hold you accountable for any changes that roll back this highly successful and cherished program that has helped to bring internet connectivity and broadband to schools and libraries throughout the nation.

Sincerely,



BILL NELSON
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Chairman