

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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March 7, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Ms. Radha Sekar  
Chief Executive Officer  
Universal Service Administrative Co.  
700 12th Street NW, Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Chairman Pai and Ms. Sekar:

Since Congress created the E-Rate program in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, it has been successful in ensuring the nation's schools and libraries are connected to the internet. The internet has become a standard part of the learning experience for children all across America, and the E-Rate program has helped ensure that students in working-class and rural neighborhoods are afforded the same opportunities as students from more affluent communities. It is particularly essential in many areas in the country where schools and libraries may serve as the only source of free public internet access. For all these reasons and many more, E-Rate has enjoyed broad bipartisan support since its inception.

In October, the Universal Service Administrative Co. (USAC) selected a new vendor for the processing of E-Rate applications. We make no determination as to the merits of the procurement process; however, as USAC has changed vendors, it is imperative that kids, schools, and libraries are not negatively impacted by this decision. It is incumbent upon both USAC and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure a smooth transition and to maintain the continuity of the program. We write to express our concerns about how this transition to a new vendor for reviewing applications may impact the success of this program.

This past year 95% of applications were processed by September 3, 2018.<sup>1</sup> To ensure there is no disruption in disbursing funds, this milestone should be met or exceeded by the incoming vendor. We respectfully request a response to the following question: Do you have a plan for ensuring a smooth transition to the new vendor? If so, please provide details. If not, do you foresee any challenges in reaching the processing of 95% of applications by the beginning of September 2019 for the next cycle?

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<sup>1</sup> Mel Leonor, *Start of school met with teach unrest in the West Coast*, Politico Morning Education (Sept. 5, 2018), <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/morning-education/2018/09/05/start-of-school-met-with-teacher-unrest-in-the-west-coast-330464>.

Thank you to your attention to this important matter. We respectfully request a written response by March 28, 2019.

Sincerely,

 

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator