

Media Contact:

Anne Veigle
anne.veigle@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

FCC CHAIRWOMAN ROSENWORCEL TAKES STEPS TO PROTECT SCHOOLS AGAINST CYBER ATTACKS

Would Build on Learn Without Limits Initiative by Launching Pilot Program

WASHINGTON, July 12, 2023—Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today announced is asking her fellow Commissioners to support a proposal that would take further steps to enhance cybersecurity protections to protect school networks. In a speech before the School Superintendents Association and the Association of School Business officers, Rosenworcel said she would be sharing with her colleagues a plan to create a pilot program to invest in cybersecurity services for eligible K-12 schools and libraries.

“With the growing number of sophisticated cyberattacks on schools and especially the rise in malicious ransomware attacks that harm our students, now is the time to take action,” said **FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel**. “We’re proposing a significant investment of up to \$200 million over three years to harden the cyber defenses and determine the most effective methods to protect our schools and libraries. Our pilot program will work in tandem with federal agency partners that have deep expertise in this area.”

The proposal is another step in Rosenworcel’s recently launched Learn Without Limits initiative to modernize the E-Rate program, which was established in 1996 to provide funds to libraries and schools for basic internet connections. [Learn Without Limits](#) was kicked off at a June 26 speech Rosenworcel gave at the American Library Association’s annual conference, where she called on her fellow Commissioners to support new efforts to allow E-Rate funding to support Wi-Fi support on school buses. The goal is to provide connectivity to students living in rural areas who spend long hours on school buses to get back and forth from school.

Rosenworcel’s second phase of Learn Without Limits calls on her fellow commissioners to support a proposal allowing E-Rate funding to support provision of Wi-Fi hotspots so that libraries, school libraries, and schools can check them out to patrons or students in need in the same way they check out libraries and other learning materials to patrons.

The third phase of Learn Without Limits is a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, that if adopted, that seeks comment on structuring a pilot program to support cybersecurity and advanced firewall-related services for eligible K-12 schools and libraries. The Commission has been closely looking at this issue for years, and in December 2022 put out a [notice](#) seeking public comment whether to add advanced firewalls or other network security services as E-Rate eligible services. The proposal put forward today would establish the pilot program within the Universal Service Fund, but separate from the E-Rate program, to ensure gains in enhanced cybersecurity don’t come at a cost of undermining E-Rate’s success in promoting digital equity.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will require a full vote of the Commission, and the text of proposal will be released upon their adoption.

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Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / Twitter: @FCC / www.fcc.gov

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).