

**STATEMENT OF
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries, WC Docket No. 13-184.

This is a pivotal moment. As we've heard from Secretary Spellings, Professor Steyer, and Dr. Word technology has the power to revolutionize education in America.

But we are not where we need to be relative to other nations and to the rate of technology adoption in this nation. And one of the biggest obstacles to seizing the opportunities of digital learning in America is inadequate bandwidth at our schools and libraries. Simply put, they need faster high-capacity connections and they need them now.

Today, however, we take an important step toward ensuring that our schools and libraries have the bandwidth they need: we launch a modernization of E-Rate that the times demand and our children deserve.

E-rate is one of the FCC's biggest success stories. This public-private partnership has helped connect nearly every U.S. library and school to the Internet. This includes places like Kenmore Middle School in Arlington, which I visited two years ago. That is where I first met Dr. Word and saw some of the amazing things he and his staff have achieved. It also includes schools like Loris Elementary in my home state of South Carolina.

You've heard about Kenmore so let me tell you a little about Loris, South Carolina. It is a town of about 2,400 people, almost half of whom live in poverty. But the local elementary school is using technology to help their children rise above these circumstances. Every student in grades three through five has been assigned a laptop loaded with learning software. Teachers are using digital tools to assess each student's progress in real time and offer differentiated instruction to meet each student's individual needs. Now, test scores are up and in state rankings of similar schools Loris Elementary rose from 41st into the top 20.

Places like Kenmore Middle and Loris Elementary remind us that broadband has the potential to be the great equalizer for our children. It doesn't matter whether you live in a rural, low-income area or in a wealthy urban community, connecting a child to the Internet links them to cutting-edge instruction and new learning opportunities.

Our goal should be to make this the rule and not the exception.

We also need to ensure, similar advances for libraries. These reference centers are key pieces of the overall education picture because they support kindergarten-through-12th grade students after school hours with online research resources, interactive online homework help, and digital learning labs. They also support home-schooled students, distance learners, GED preparation and test-taking, job retraining, and other lifelong learning.

Libraries are the civic hubs for the information age providing the public with digital literacy training and free Internet access so community members may apply for jobs, learn new skills, and access critical government resources.

While E-rate has made a significant impact on connectivity for schools and libraries over the past 15 years, today's cutting-edge educational tools and learning platforms were not part of the landscape when the Commission first implemented this Congressional directive.

As educators increasingly integrate digital content into their lesson plans, faster speeds and additional capacity are needed to accommodate all of the interactive, educational uses the Internet offers. Although some schools have sufficient capacity to implement digital learning tools and strategies, too many do not. In fact, in a 2010 FCC survey of schools and districts, nearly half of respondents reported lower speed Internet connectivity than the average American home. Similarly, forty-one percent of libraries reported that their connectivity was inadequate to meet patron demand in 2012, and fewer than 10 percent of America's libraries offer Internet speeds of 100Mbps or faster.

This is simply not good enough. We must ensure that our young people, teachers, and the millions of citizens that use libraries each year have access to the tools they need to compete and succeed in the digital age. We need to do this for our children and we need to do this for our nation. The U.S. will fall behind in the 21st century economy if our classrooms don't evolve beyond a 19th century model.

Last month, President Obama went to Mooresville High School in North Carolina and issued a call for action to close our education system's bandwidth deficit. He announced his ConnectED initiative and called on the FCC to bring high-speed Internet to 99% of U.S. students within five years.

Answering the President's call will require modernizing E-Rate.

Fortunately, the Commission began the process of updating E-Rate in 2010, starting with recommendations outlined in the National Broadband Plan to cut red tape and give schools and libraries flexibility to get higher-capacity and more cost-effective broadband services.

But now is the time for a more significant revamp.

Once again, we will roll up our sleeves and do what it takes to ensure that our nation's schools and libraries have the broadband connections needed to meet their current and future requirements. This item is the critical first step.

Today, we propose clear goals and seek comment on a variety of options for modernizing E-rate. This item advocates providing our schools and libraries with affordable access to high-capacity broadband, maximizing the cost effectiveness of purchases, and ensuring the administrative efficiency of E-rate. It also explores how to get better data, and how to use that data to make the best use of the E-rate funds. It inquires about the best ways to distribute funding fairly, considers phasing out support for outdated services and using any savings toward investments in more bandwidth.

The questions posed offer a starting point from which schools and libraries, state and local officials, and all interested stakeholders can share their views with the Commission. We look forward to this conversation and the leveraging of their knowledge and investments in order to establish the foundation for real, positive change in our classrooms and libraries.

I join my colleagues in calling on all stakeholders to work cooperatively to ensure that the culmination of our efforts will be the beginning of a modernized E-rate program that fulfills its promise to our nation's schoolchildren and library patrons.

As I close, I wish to thank Secretary Spellings and Professor Steyer for joining us today, and for all of your work over the past 16 months. The LEAD Commission's blueprint embodies serious thinking about the opportunities education technology puts within the grasp of our Nation's children and teachers and how we can seize those opportunities as a nation.

Dr. Word, thank you for all that you do each day. Often when I think that I have a hard job, I think about my father, a former high school teacher and my sister Jennifer, a middle school teacher in South Carolina. You have the really hard job. For having 700 kids in your care every day, Dr. Word, we owe you much, and many thanks for coming by on one of your few days off.

Thank you to E-rate's supporters on Capitol Hill, in particular Senator Rockefeller and Senator Markey, and former Senator Snowe, who have been champions of E-Rate from its beginning.

Thank you to my fellow Commissioners, in particular Commissioner Rosenworcel whose passionate advocacy for a vital E-Rate goes back to her days as a Congressional staffer. And thank you, of course, to the incredibly dedicated and overworked staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau, and my wireline advisor Rebekah Goodheart, we all truly appreciate the tireless work that went into the presentation of this item.