

National Organizations Applaud FCC Chairman Wheeler's Announcement to Increase Funding for E-Rate

November 17, 2014

Washington, DC – National organizations today expressed their strong support for Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler's proposal to expand students' and library patrons' access to the Internet and permanently increase the funding level of the E-Rate program by raising the cap by \$1.5 billion.

We applaud Chairman Wheeler's effort to expand educational opportunities for our nation's school children and learners of all ages. By focusing on high-capacity broadband connections to the Internet for all schools and libraries, particularly those in rural communities, and providing sustained, additional funding to the E-Rate program, the modernized program will ensure that our nation's schools and public libraries are able to keep pace with rapidly increasing Internet connectivity needs.

Chairman Wheeler's continued leadership on this issue reiterates his commitment to core tenets of the E-Rate program, including access to 21st century education and learning and supporting the program's growth and transition from connectivity to the Internet to ensuring sufficient capacity in an equitable way. Access, growth, and equity within the E-Rate program are not sustainable without significant additional funding to support the program's current and future goals.

Funded at \$2.25 billion annually since 1999, the E-Rate was level-funded until 2010, when it began receiving annual inflationary increases. Total funding for the program in fiscal year 2013 was \$2.413 billion, less than half of school and library demand for that year. An increase of \$1.5 billion equates to just 16 cents per month per line, or less than a penny per day or a cup of coffee per year.

The Chairman's proposal to infuse \$1.5 billion into the E-Rate program will ensure that:

- At least 10 million of our neediest students will gain access to WiFi in 2015.
- Thousands of additional schools and libraries, including many in rural and remote areas, will gain access to support for external high speed Internet connections, reaching millions of students and community members.

In addition to focusing on closing access and affordability gaps within the program, Chairman Wheeler has paid careful attention to the unique challenges of connecting rural communities. The permanent infusion of additional funding is a strong step towards closing these gaps.

An increase of \$1.5 billion into the E-Rate program is about more than activating or increasing the capacity of a broadband connection. It is about empowering minds, providing more equitable access to information across the globe, and enabling students and library patrons to develop the technological skills they need to be knowledgeable and engaged contributors to society. It is about bringing our classrooms and libraries into the 21st century by connecting students and educators in their schools and the public in their libraries, allowing them to gain access to unlimited resources and collaborate with the world.

Signatories

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Library Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Council of the Great City Schools
International Society for Technology in Education
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Catholic Educational Association
National Education Association
National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition
State Educational Technology Directors Association