



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 1, 2014

The Honorable Bob Casey
United States Senate
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Casey:

Thank you for your follow-up letter expressing concern about the E-Rate program cutting funds for web hosting. As you know, on July 11th the Commission adopted a new set of rules for the E-rate program.

I understand fully your concern and agree that web hosting services can be a valuable tool for school districts. The issue we face is how best to prioritize E-rate dollars so that all schools have the underlying broadband connectivity necessary for students and teachers to take advantage of the growing universe of available digital learning tools, as well as so libraries can serve their communities. Simply put, if broadband is the priority, then too many funds were being spent on non-broadband activities.

Schools need broadband connectivity to take advantage of digital learning technologies, and libraries need to provide their patrons with high-speed access to the Internet. I recognize the E-rate program has previously supported a variety of services, such as web hosting. However, I firmly believe that, in order to meet educational needs, the E-rate program must place a priority on ensuring that every school in America has a high-speed broadband connection and high-speed Wi-Fi in every classroom. Unfortunately, meeting that goal has meant redirecting funds previously spent on other activities such as web hosting.

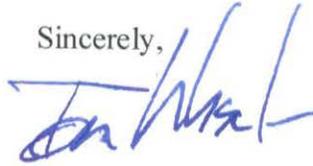
The *Order* adopted by the Commission at our July Open Meeting takes significant steps to address the Wi-Fi gap in America's schools today. Given that 40 percent of classrooms are not currently Wi-Fi-enabled, and nearly two-thirds of schools indicate that they do not have sufficient Wi-Fi capacity to meet their digital learning needs, it is critically important that we focus our limited program resources on connectivity, not just to the school or library, but to the student or library patron. The *Order* funds this support for Wi-Fi through the combination of funds already available for this purpose and by utilizing savings associated with transitioning support from non-broadband services to broadband.

As I have said before, E-rate modernization is one of the most important issues in front of the Commission today. We have an opportunity to make a real, positive difference in the lives of millions of students. I look forward to working with you and your colleagues toward our mutual goal of increased access to high-speed broadband in our nation's schools.

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Thank you again for your interest in this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tom Wheeler