

November 17, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write in response to the Wireline Competition Bureau's Public Notice seeking comment on the sufficiency of the E-Rate program's formula for category two services, which provides schools and libraries support for Wi-Fi and internal connections. We urge you to protect the E-Rate program and resist any proposal to prematurely modify category two funding.

The E-Rate program is an essential source of federal funding to connect the nation's schools and libraries to the internet. These institutions are vital outlets to help connect all Americans, including millions of students and Americans in rural parts of the country. For many, these schools and libraries are the only source of free public internet access, and play a critical role in helping close the digital divide.

As smartphones and tablets became nearly ubiquitous throughout society, the FCC modernized the E-Rate program in 2014, making funds available to expand Wi-Fi networks in schools and libraries across the nation. The modernization provided schools and libraries the resources they need to build out their Wi-Fi networks, helping ensure that our students and underserved Americans are not left behind as we transition into an increasingly wireless world.

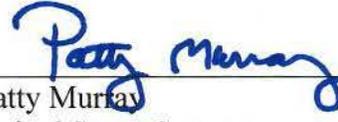
When the Commission approved the modernization, the FCC directed the Wireline Competition Bureau to compile a report on the adequacy of the funding level for category two services by the opening of the 2019 program year. While we appreciate the Bureau's eagerness to begin this evaluation well in advance of the deadline, we believe it is premature to evaluate the adequacy of the modernization, given its recent implementation and utilization. The expanded funding for category two services has only been available to schools and libraries for three filing periods. Applicants are given the flexibility to file for category two services anytime in the five-year period and may be planning to tap these resources later in the five-year window, making it impossible to fully evaluate the program's effectiveness at this time. We urge the commission to not prematurely make modifications to this important source of funding, which helps ensure all Americans – whether urban or rural, rich or poor – remain connected and competitive in this global economy.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you would like additional information about our request, please contact Daniel Greene in Senator Markey's office (202 – 224 – 2742).

Sincerely,



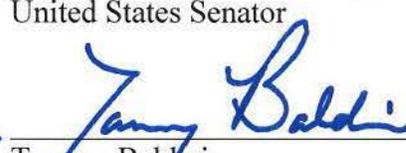
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



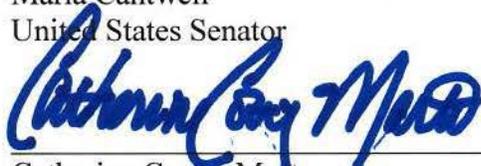
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator