

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 3, 2026

The Honorable Brendan Carr
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Carr,

We write to express our strong support for the E-Rate program in response to the FCC's recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) considering whether the E-Rate program should be terminated or restricted to rural areas.

E-Rate is a \$3.2 billion-a-year program that provides libraries and schools with discounts of 20 to 90% on telecommunications services and equipment, depending on the percentage of low-income students they serve.¹ Unlike most federal programs, E-Rate is not funded through annual taxpayer appropriations. Instead, Congress structured the program to be financed through mandatory contributions from telecommunications carriers through the Universal Service Fund.²

The E-Rate program has helped libraries and schools afford broadband connectivity since its creation in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, when only 14% of libraries and schools had internet access. Today, that figure is nearly 100%,³ and the program supports over 12,500 libraries and 106,000 schools nationwide.⁴ E-Rate has also been instrumental in bringing broadband to entire communities. For example, six tribal libraries and two schools in New Mexico used E-Rate funding to build two tribally operated modern fiber networks spanning 120 miles and six sovereign nations.⁵

¹ Universal Service Administrative Company, *Service Provider Process*, <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/service-providers/>.

² Congressional Record, *Protect the E-Rate for America's Children* (June 16, 1998), [https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-144/issue-78/house-section/article/H4619-2?utm_](https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-144/issue-78/house-section/article/H4619-2?utm_=),

³ Sequoia Carrillo, "No internet, no screen time? FCC weighs cutting subsidy that lowers school internet bills," *NPR* (July 10, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/10/nx-s1-5878405/fcc-erate-schools-internet-discount>,

⁴ Barbara Ortutay, "FCC moves to end discounts for Wi-Fi hotspot lending and school bus connectivity," *AP News* (September 30, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/fcc-wifi-hotspots-schools-library-bus-rural-c8ecb6e0c60b6a686361f4a96d7b7be4>,

⁵ Sam Helmick, "At 30, E-Rate is a proven success. Let's keep improving it," *The Hill* (February 13, 2026), <https://thehill.com/opinion/technology/5736390-erate-30th-anniversary-impact/>,

The FCC has overseen the E-Rate program through both Democratic and Republican administrations, and the program has historically enjoyed broad bipartisan support. The FCC itself has acknowledged E-Rate's importance, calling it an "extraordinary success as the federal government's largest education technology program."⁶ The program has also become a model for other federal initiatives. In 2025, the Government Accountability Office reviewed five federal programs for compliance with requirements to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse, and E-Rate was the only program to receive a perfect score.⁷

As reflected in the FCC's FY2025 Eligible Services List, E-Rate primarily supports broadband connectivity and the network infrastructure needed to deliver it. Eligible services include internet access, data transmission, fiber connections, routers, switches, cabling, wireless access points, firewalls, and other networking equipment and services. By contrast, end-user devices such as laptops, tablets, desktop computers, and email services are not eligible for E-Rate funding.⁸

You have publicly stated that you are reviewing the E-Rate program due to concerns about students' screen time.⁹ However, the FCC's own eligible services list demonstrates that E-Rate remains focused on broadband connectivity and network infrastructure – not classroom devices or content that could reasonably be characterized as contributing to students' rising screen time.

It would also be unreasonable to conclude that, because libraries and schools have achieved historically high levels of connectivity, the E-Rate program is no longer needed. These gains are a direct result of sustained E-Rate investments, and there is no realistic scenario in which 21st-century libraries and schools can operate without reliable broadband infrastructure. Eliminating or significantly reducing E-Rate would not reduce students' screen time – it would simply make it more difficult for schools to provide secure internet access, administer online assessments, protect against cyber threats, communicate with families, and carry out essential day-to-day operations. Continual upgrades to infrastructure will also be essential to ensure that students are not able to access inappropriate material or websites on school networks.

Cuts to E-Rate would place significant financial strain on schools across the country, particularly those serving low-income communities. As such, we respectfully urge the Commission to preserve the E-Rate program and address any concerns regarding student screen time through policies that do not undermine the digital infrastructure on which libraries and schools depend.

Sincerely,

⁶ Federal Communications Commission, *FCC Releases E-Rate Modernization Order* (July 23, 2014), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-releases-e-rate-modernization-order>,

⁷ Sam Helmick, "At 30, E-Rate is a proven success. Let's keep improving it," *The Hill* (February 13, 2026), <https://thehill.com/opinion/technology/5736390-erate-30th-anniversary-impact/>,

⁸ Federal Communications Commission, *WCB Adopts the Final Eligible Services List for Funding Year 2025* (October 25, 2024), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/wcb-adopts-final-eligible-services-list-funding-year-2025>,

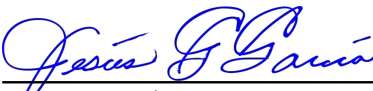
⁹ Federal Communications Commission, *FCC to Review E-Rate Program to Ensure Congress's Vision* (June 26, 2026), <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-review-e-rate-program-ensure-congresss-vision>.



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



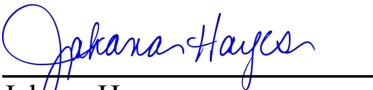
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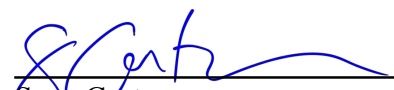
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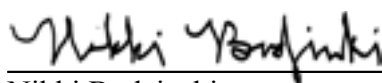
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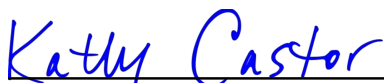
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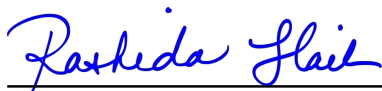
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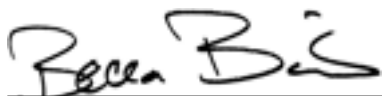
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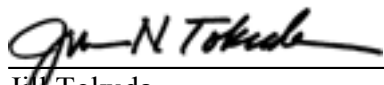
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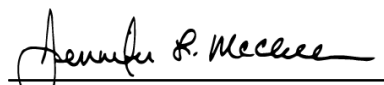
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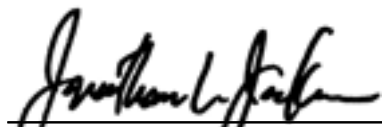
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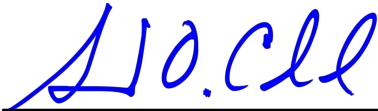
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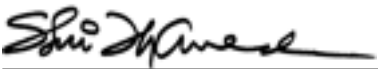
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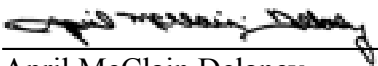
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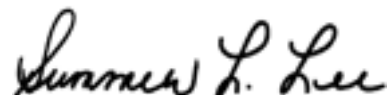
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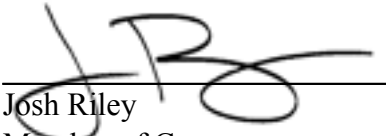
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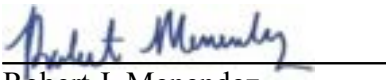
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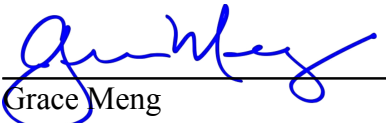
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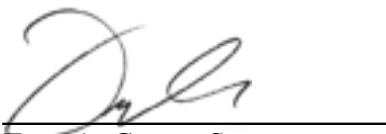
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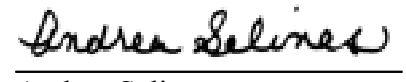
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