

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 2, 2014

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner Rosenworcel, Commissioner Pai, and Commissioner O’Rielly:

As Members of Congress committed to improving our education system through innovation and preparing our students for 21st century jobs, we write in support of modernizing the E-rate program to help connect our nation’s schools and libraries to high-speed broadband over the next five years. America’s schools and libraries are in need of a technological update to accelerate next-generation education reforms, support teachers, and enhance student learning through universal access to high-speed broadband. Technology has dramatically changed since the E-rate program was established 18 years ago, and the funding priorities must reflect the changing nature of the Internet, so that our classrooms and students have access to today’s technology.

Closing the education and access gap starts with extending digital opportunities across America to all of our students. This requires ensuring that our schools and libraries can take advantage of new technologies and high-quality educational content. However, many of our schools do not have the Internet speed needed to take advantage of digital learning opportunities. Experts agree that to enable students to take full advantage of digital learning, America’s schools should aim for 100 Mbps of bandwidth or more for every 1,000 students and staff members today, and 1 Gbps by 2017. The E-rate program has the ability to make these updates and bring our Internet services in line with global, competitive standards. Fifty major CEOs recognize the importance of updating this program for American competitiveness, and stated so in a similar letter to the FCC earlier this year.

Improving our education system and preparing our students for 21st century jobs is a bipartisan priority. We are proud to support, in a bipartisan manner, the recommended update to the E-rate program. We believe the FCC should:

1. Focus E-rate on broadband services, Wi-Fi updates, and filling the infrastructure gap, with continued support for connectivity services, to ensure universal access to the most up to date technology;
2. Ensure that schools and libraries are paying for the best service at the lowest price through competitive Internet service offerings and purchaser coordination, so that the program’s money is spent smarter and spread wider;
3. Increase transparency and accountability for the program in order to reduce costs, share data collected to improve best practices, and ensure that all students have access to the connectivity they need;

4. Ensure that program rules result in funding stability to improve program efficiency and schools' financial planning, particularly for broadband connections within schools and libraries (particularly Wi-Fi) where there has been a lack of certainty in the past; and
5. Simplify and streamline the application process.

As a recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report found, the United States is behind most developed countries in digital literacy skills. In order to improve our digital literacy skills, we must begin by ensuring reliable and universal access to the Internet in our classrooms and libraries. Therefore, we urge the Commission to move forward on modernizing the E-rate program and increase access to high-speed broadband for our students.

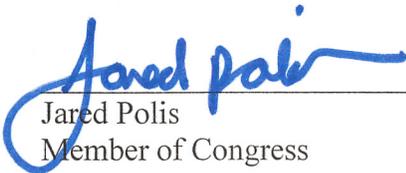
Sincerely,



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



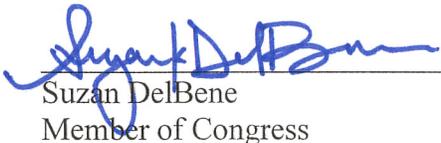
Charles W. Dent
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress



Chris Gibson
Member of Congress



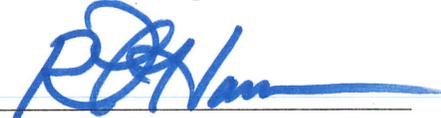
Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress



John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



Richard L. Hanna
Member of Congress



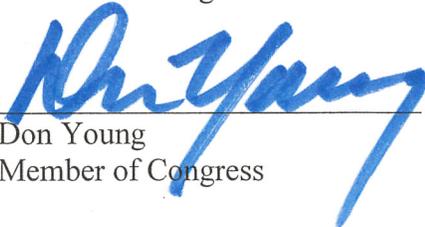
Joe Garcia
Member of Congress



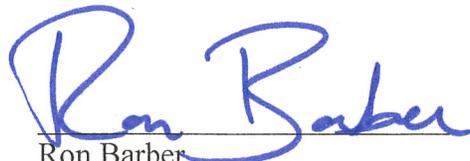
Markwayne Mullin
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Scott Peters
Member of Congress



Don Young
Member of Congress



Ron Barber
Member of Congress



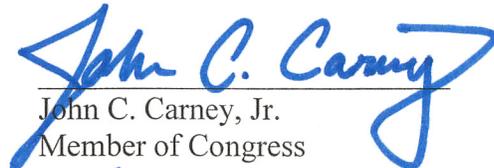
Ami Bera, M.D.
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Lois Capps
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



John C. Carney, Jr.
Member of Congress



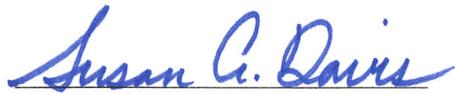
André Carson
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Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



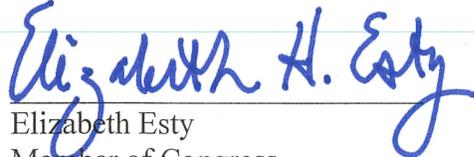
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Susan Davis
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Eliot L. Engel
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Elizabeth Esty
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Bill Foster
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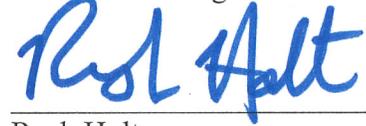
Pete Gallego
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Denny Heck
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James A. Himes
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Rush Holt
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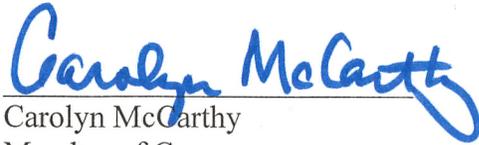
Steve Israel
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



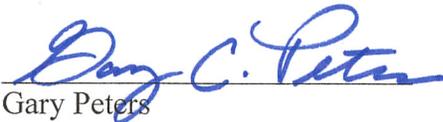
Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



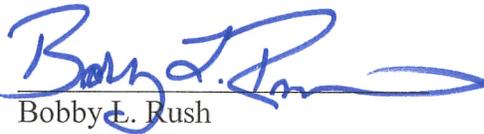
Carolyn McCarthy
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Bobby L. Rush
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Kurt Schrader
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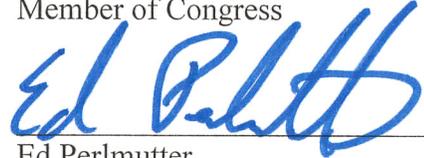
Juan Vargas
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Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



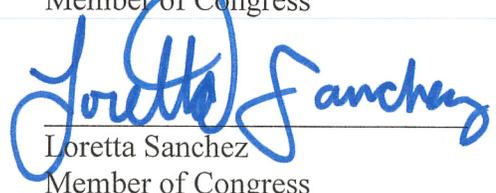
Patrick Murphy
Member of Congress



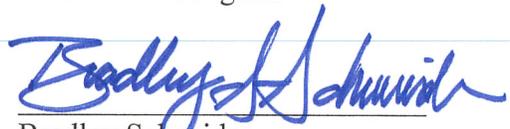
Ed Perlmutter
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