

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of	)	
Schools and Libraries	)	
Universal Service Support Mechanism	)	CC Docket No. 02-6
	)	
Connect America Fund	)	WC Docket No. 10-90
	)	
Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries	)	WC Docket No. 13-184
	)	

To: Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau

**REPLY COMMENTS OF THE UTILITIES TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL**

Pursuant to Section 1.405 of the Commission’s Rules, the Utilities Technology Council (“UTC”)<sup>1</sup> hereby files the following reply comments in response to the Commission’s Public Notice in the above-referenced proceedings.<sup>2</sup> UTC supports the petition by Microsoft Corporation, Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation (MBC) and other petitioners, and the petition by Boulder Valley School District, which seek to extend E-rate to apply to broadband for off-campus use and to waive the requirement for the E-rate applicant to cost allocate the portion of the traffic attributable to off-campus use.<sup>3</sup>

UTC agrees with numerous comments submitted on the record that support the petitions as a common sense solution to address the Homework Gap.<sup>4</sup> An estimated 5 million American

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<sup>1</sup> UTC was formerly the “Utilities Telecom Council”. See [www.utc.org](http://www.utc.org).

<sup>2</sup> See *Public Notice*, “Wireline Competition Bureau Seeks Comment on Petitions Regarding Off-Campus Use of Existing E-rate Supported Connectivity,” CC Docket No. 02-6, WC Docket No. 10-90 and WC Docket No. 13-184, DA 16-1051 (rel. Sept. 19, 2016) (“*Public Notice*”).

<sup>3</sup> See Joint Petition for Clarification or, in the Alternative, Waiver of Microsoft Corporation, Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation, Charlotte County Public Schools, Halifax County Public Schools, GCR Company, and Kinex Telecom, WC Docket No. 13-184 (filed June 7, 2016) (“Virginia Petition”); and Petition for Waiver on behalf of Boulder Valley School District, WC Docket Nos. 13-184 and 10-90 (filed May 16, 2016) (“BVSD Petition”) (collectively, “Petitions”).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Initial Comments from the State of Nebraska Office of the CIO and the Nebraska Department of Education

households with school-aged children are affected by the Homework Gap. This problem is particularly acute in rural and underserved areas that lack Internet access, and in low-income areas where families simply can't afford to pay for Internet access. This places children in these areas at a fundamental disadvantage.

While the ConnectED program has helped to provide access to 20 million more kids at school, once they leave school and go home they need access to broadband to do their homework. It's a basic reality in today's world that kids need access to the Internet to do their homework; and lack of Internet access at home is a barrier to achieving the nation's overarching educational goals and objectives. That is why extending E-rate to support off-campus use is consistent with the purpose of the Schools and Libraries Program.

Comments that oppose extending E-rate for off campus Internet access attempt to throw up roadblocks that can easily be managed to safeguard against abuse. For example, it should be relatively easy to associate the IP-address of a student's computer in a home or other location outside of school, regardless of whether it is accessing the Internet wirelessly or via wireline technologies. As such, comments that oppose extending E-rate because of insufficient safeguards against abuse are ignoring solutions that could address their concerns.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, comments from providers such as Sprint demonstrate that it is possible to ensure that the network

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on Petitions Regarding Off-Campus Use of Existing E-rate Supported Connectivity in WC Docket No. 13-184 at 3 (filed Nov. 3, 2016)(stating that “the Nebraska Department of Education and State OCIO support extending after hour use of E-rate eligible services to students in their homes.”); Comments of New America's Open Technology Institute, Center for Rural Strategies, National Hispanic Media Coalition, Public Knowledge, X-Lab and United Church of Christ in WC Docket 13-184 at 1 (filed Nov. 3, 2016)(stating that “The FCC should grant the Petitions and clarify that extending access to the Internet and to online school services for students and faculty off-campus can be an eligible expense under E-rate.”); and Comments of the Voice on the Net Coalition in WC Docket No. 13-184 at 3 (filed Nov. 3, 2016)(stating that “VON supports the Petitions and the use of advanced communications services to enhance educational opportunities for participating students, without imposing any additional costs on the E-rate program. In addition, student's use of the internet in their home environments for educational purposes will demonstrate the importance, and promise, of internet connectivity, creating greater incentives for the household to purchase internet access.”)

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Comments of ITTA – the Voice of Mid-Size Communications Companies in WC Docket No. 13-184 at 10 (arguing that “Petitioners' Proposed Projects Do Not Sufficiently Safeguard the E-rate Program.”)

