

Education & Libraries Networks Coalition

The Hon. Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Dan Sullivan
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Mazie Hirono
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Lisa Murkowski
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

November 22, 2019

Dear Senators Schatz, Sullivan, Murkowski and Hirono:

The Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) thanks you for your recent letter to Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai expressing concern about the Commission's proposals to establish an overall cap for the universal service fund (USF) and a sub-cap for the E-Rate and Rural Health Care programs and urging the Commission "not to proceed down this path." From EdLiNC's perspective, these proposals endanger the stability of the E-Rate program, which has helped provide broadband connectivity to hundreds of millions of our nation's school children and public library patrons and which has provided your states with, collectively, more than \$1 billion in commitments since its inception in 1998. We hope that the Chairman will read your letter carefully and heed its sensible suggestion that the Commission find other ways to "generate data that will help the FCC improve the function of USF programs."

As a group comprised of the major K-12 public and private non-profit education associations and the American Library Association with a mission to preserve and protect the E-Rate program, we were heartened by your thoughtful letter. It echoed many of the concerns that we raised in our own public filing in this proceeding, including our belief that the Commission's proposal to impose an overall cap on all universal service fund programs would inevitably lead to unnecessary and damaging competition among and between the four existing universal service programs. Additionally, we believe that the Commission's proposal to merge the spending caps for the E-Rate and Rural Health Care programs into a single cap would result in a de facto combining of the two programs in contravention of the clear intent of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which authorized both programs, and would almost immediately establish a dangerous precedent of allowing one universal service program to access and use another program's designated funds

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Our organizations and America's schoolchildren and public library patrons appreciate deeply this letter and your clear commitment to the E-Rate program. We look forward to continuing to work with each of you to preserve and protect the E-Rate program and to ensure that all of America's public and private students and public library patrons gain access to the broadband connectivity needed to participate equitably in school, the job market and government services.

Sincerely,

AASA: The School Superintendents Association
American Library Association
Association of Education Service Agencies
Consortium for School Networking
International Society for Technology in Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Independent Schools
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Catholic Educational Association
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
State Educational Technology Directors Association
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops