STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR

November 12, 2026

The Honorable Brendan Carr
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Comment on FCC NPRM to Review E-Rate Program to Ensure Congress's Vision (WC Docket Nos. 26-133, 13-184; FCC 26-41)

Dear Chairman Carr,

We write to express our strong support for the E-Rate program, which for nearly three decades has provided discounted rates for internet and other telecommunications services to public and private schools and libraries across the country. In North Carolina, the program has helped 2,800 schools and 200 libraries obtain affordable access to the communications services necessary to serve their students and communities, including providing over $50 million for these services last year alone. While significant progress has been made expanding broadband availability across North Carolina, the need for affordable, reliable, and high-capacity connectivity has not diminished. We urge the Commission to preserve the E-Rate program and reject proposals to sunset or substantially narrow its scope.

Connectivity is essential to modern educational opportunity. That is as true now as it was in 1996 when Congress added Section 254 to the Communications Act of 1934, providing the statutory foundation for the E-Rate program. Today, students use connected devices and online resources to conduct research, complete assignments, collaborate with classmates, access instructional materials, and develop the digital skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly connected economy. Teachers rely on the internet to deliver instruction, personalize learning, and administer assessments. Schools and public libraries likewise provide essential access to digital resources and online services.

Further, internet connectivity is an operational necessity for modern schools. Administrators and staff depend on these networks to perform the daily functions necessary to operate a school system, including managing student records and attendance, communicating with families, and maintaining school safety.

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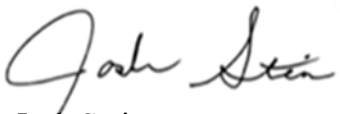
Eliminating or significantly changing E-Rate would not eliminate the need for connectivity in schools and libraries. Rather, it would shift the cost of maintaining essential services to state and local governments, individual school districts, and libraries. For many school systems, particularly those operating under significant budget constraints, E-Rate support makes the difference between maintaining adequate connectivity and diverting limited resources from other educational priorities. Without this support, schools and libraries would face difficult choices: absorb substantial costs, reduce network capacity or services, defer necessary upgrades, or redirect funding from teachers, instructional materials, and other student needs. These consequences would ultimately be felt most by the students and communities that these institutions serve.

In rural North Carolina, schools and libraries face limited broadband infrastructure, fewer service-provider options, and higher costs to obtain reliable, high-speed connections. E-Rate helps address these challenges and ensures that a student's educational opportunities are not determined by the geography of the community in which that student lives. However, the value of E-Rate is not limited to rural communities—urban and suburban schools also face substantial connectivity demands, including the need to serve large student populations and support numerous connected devices. Limiting E-Rate support to rural areas would risk overlooking these ongoing needs, potentially producing uneven opportunities and outcomes.

We recognize the importance of responsible stewardship of federal resources, appropriate oversight of federally funded programs, and protection for children online. Likewise, we support efforts to promote healthy limits on screen time and to ensure connectivity is used responsibly in educational settings. However, the Commission can adopt additional safeguards that support student safety and well-being while also maintaining a strong and robust E-rate program.

We urge the Commission to preserve E-Rate as a continuing source of support for schools and libraries across the country. This program is a critical component of the Commission's mission to make available to all people affordable, reliable communications services. Together, we should build on the progress this program has made, not jeopardize it by shifting its costs to the schools, libraries, and local communities least equipped to absorb them.

Respectfully,



Josh Stein
Governor of North Carolina



Maurice "Mo" Green
North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction