



For Immediate Release
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EdLiNC applauds FCC's plan to raise E-rate cap, simplify applications

Washington, D.C. - The Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC), a coalition comprised of the major national public and private K-12 education associations and the American Library Association, is delighted that the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) National Broadband Plan (NBP) recognizes the value of the E-rate program and calls for lifting the current funding cap from \$2.25 billion annually. However, EdLiNC cautions against expanding program participation before ensuring the needs of currently eligible entities are met.

EdLiNC members applaud the FCC's call to issue a rulemaking to raise the cap on funding for E-rate each year to account for inflation. This recommendation is a significant development for K-12 schools and public libraries. The annual demand for E-rate discounts has routinely exceeded the cap, which has never been increased and has not kept up with inflation.

EdLiNC believes it is time to raise the E-rate funding cap to adjust for inflation as well as to meet the increasing demands on the program. Doing so is the only way to ensure that America's students and the general public have access to the wealth of information and educational services for which broadband access is a prerequisite. However, EdLiNC cautions that merely adjusting the current funding cap to meet inflation would be an inadequate response. A large unmet demand has amassed due to consistent underfunding of the E-rate program.

In addition, given the E-rate program's current inability to meet existing demand EdLiNC cannot support extending program eligibility to support new services, however meritorious. EdLiNC also cautions against making even a portion of the program's funds available on a competitive basis, as eligibility has always been determined based on need. The members of EdLiNC firmly believe that the program must be able to serve the needs of its intended beneficiaries adequately – K-12 public and private schools and public libraries – before extending or expanding support.

Finally, EdLiNC supports the FCC's recommendations to streamline the E-rate program application process. EdLiNC's members have been on record for many years in support of revising the application process to help simplify and streamline the process. We hope that the FCC can move quickly to adopt and implement these simple fixes.

EdLiNC stands ready to work with the FCC as it moves towards implementing the National Broadband Plan's E-rate recommendations. We hope that the movement to raise the E-rate program's cap and to simplify the application process proceeds expeditiously. These changes will help us fulfill the mission of those we serve – our nation's students and those served by their public libraries.

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The Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) was formed in 1995 to represent the viewpoint of public and private schools and libraries in the FCC proceeding dealing with the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Members include: the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the Association of Educational Service Agencies, the American Library Association, the Consortium for School Networking, the Education Legislative Services, the International Society for Technology in Education, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Independent Schools, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Catholic Educational Association, the National Education Association, the PTA, the National School Boards Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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