

July 1, 2013

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn, Acting Chairwoman
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
The Honorable Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: ConnectED initiative and e-Rate program

Dear Chairwoman Clyburn, Commissioner Rosenworcel, and Commissioner Pai:

The nation's education system is the nation's operating system and it is in need of an upgrade. Therefore, the undersigned organizations are pleased to endorse ConnectED, President Obama's plan for connecting all schools to twenty-first-century technology. We ask you to take swift action in implementing the President's call to modernize and leverage the existing e-Rate program in order to provide 99 percent of America's students with high-speed wireless internet access through next-generation broadband in schools and libraries within five years.

The mismatch between student preparation and employer demands requires the technological transformation supported by ConnectED and e-Rate. More than 20 percent of the nation's students do not graduate from high school on time, if at all, and by 2020, U.S. companies will have fewer than half the number of qualified applicants for the 123 million high-skill jobs they will need to fill. Although there have been improvements over time, the pace of academic progress must be significantly accelerated. ConnectED and e-Rate will help support the changes needed in today's classrooms to ensure that the United States maintains its competitive edge in the twenty-first-century global economy.

The availability and effective use of technology is a vital component of the reform that is necessary to strengthen the nation's schools. Yet too many schools lack the infrastructure to benefit from the advances in technology that have revolutionized the way in which much of the world operates. Results from a 2010 FCC survey of e-Rate-funded schools showed that the broadband connections of nearly 80 percent of respondents did not fully meet their needs.ⁱ This must change in order for students to benefit from the promise of technology.

Digital learning opportunities, including blended learning, allow for personalized and engaging teaching and learning. High-speed broadband can literally open the world to the nation's students by increasing the availability of high-quality instruction, expanding access to rigorous course work, and providing additional opportunities for supporting student success in and beyond the classroom. Moreover, the implementation of college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments—now driving reform in all fifty states and the District of Columbia—is largely dependent upon technology that is not yet readily available in far too many school districts across the country.

The ConnectED initiative and the expansion and modernization of the e-Rate program will help transform the technological infrastructure in the nation's classrooms and libraries, allowing schools and communities to provide students with a twenty-first-century education. We, the undersigned, stand ready to support the FCC at this historic moment to connect all schools to the digital age.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance	NAACP
Alliance for Excellent Education	NALEO Educational Fund
American Association of School Administrators	National Association of Elementary School Principals
American Association of School Librarians	National Association of Secondary School Principals
American Federation of Teachers	National Association of State Boards of Education
American School Counselor Association	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Association for Career and Technical Education	National Conference on Teaching and America's Future
Association for Middle Level Education	National Council for Agricultural Education
Association of Education Service Agencies	National Council of Teachers of English
Center for American Progress	National Education Association
Consortium for School Networking	National FFA Organization
Council for Exceptional Children	National Indian Education Association
Council of Chief State School Officers	National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition
Democrats for Education Reform	National Rural Education Association
Digital Promise	National School Boards Association
Flipped Learning Network™	National School Public Relations Association
Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, NC State University College of Education	National Youth Leadership Council
International Association for K-12 Online Learning	One Economy Corp.
International Society for Technology in Education	Parents for Public Schools
KnowledgeWorks	Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers
League of United Latin American Citizens	Partnership for 21st Century Skills
Learning First Alliance	Project Tomorrow
Learning Forward	

SAS Education Initiatives

State Educational Technology Directors Association

SAS Institute Inc.

TechSmith Corporation

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

The Learning Accelerator

Software & Information Industry Association

Young Adult Library Services Association

ⁱ Federal Communications Commission, *2010 E-Rate Program and Broadband Usage Survey: Report* (Washington, DC: Author, January 2011), http://transition.fcc.gov/010511_Eratereport.pdf (accessed June 7, 2013).