

September 30, 2015

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Lifeline program

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner O’Rielly, Commissioner Pai, and Commissioner Rosenworcel:

As school and district leaders, we urge the Federal Communications Commission (the Commission) to continue its support of the Lifeline program and to modernize and expand the program to support broadband internet access.

We commend the swift action the Commission took to expand and modernize the E-rate program, making internet access a reality in high-need classrooms across the country. However, much of the advantage of education technology lies in student access to information and education tools outside of the classroom. Sadly, many students do not have broadband access at home and cannot complete assignments and supplement their learning outside school. If the nation wants to produce globally competitive graduates with twenty-first-century skills and competencies, this “homework gap” must be addressed.

Having access to broadband internet at home will also increase connectivity and opportunities for those who play vital roles in the lives of students outside the classroom—parents, guardians, other relatives, and community members. Lifeline support for broadband service, including wireline and wireless services, will create communities of lifelong learners and support systems that can further raise achievement and success throughout the country.

As Commissioner Clyburn stated during the Commission vote on E-rate expansion, “Broadband is the greatest equalizer of our time, but this only holds true if everyone has access.” We, too, believe that three legs of support are required to make broadband access meaningful in students’ lives, as Commissioner Clyburn stated: “Broadband at school, broadband in the library, and broadband at home. Absent one leg, the stool does not stand.” Since its inception, Lifeline has played a pivotal role in connecting all Americans to vital communication services, leaving no one behind. Today, those networks have moved beyond voice-only into a digital world; access to broadband at home is now a necessity in the twenty-first century.

We support the Commission in its efforts to modernize the Lifeline program to ensure that all Americans, particularly students and families most at risk, have access to affordable, high-quality broadband service. The Commission’s leadership is critical for preparing the nation’s students to compete in an increasingly global workforce.

Sincerely,

|

Brenda Arteaga  
Superintendent  
Southwest Schools  
Houston, Texas

Joseph C. Barrow, Jr.  
Superintendent  
Fayette County School District  
Fayetteville, Georgia

Gary Bates  
Superintendent  
Goodrich Independent School District  
Goodrich, Texas

Ken Bates  
Superintendent  
Green Lake School District  
Green Lake, Wisconsin

Darin Beckwith  
Superintendent  
Fountain Lake  
Hot Springs, Arkansas

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Superintendent  
Dewar Public School District  
Dewar, Oklahoma

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Superintendent  
Lunenburg County  
Kenbridge, Virginia

Steve Bianchetta  
Interim Superintendent  
Galena Unit School District 120  
Galena, Illinois

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
Ithaca Public Schools  
Ithaca, Michigan

Rodney Bowler  
Superintendent  
Henry County Schools  
McDonough, Georgia

Nicholas Brake  
Superintendent  
Owensboro (KY) Independent Schools  
Owensboro, Kentucky

Micha Bregy  
Superintendent  
North Shore School District 112  
Highland Park, Illinois

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Superintendent  
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Paoli, Indiana

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Pickerington, Ohio

Peter Bush  
Superintendent  
Coloma Community Schools  
Coloma, Michigan

Anne Campbell  
Superintendent  
San Mateo County Office of Education  
Redwood City, California

Kevin Carl  
Superintendent  
Hancock Place School District  
Louis, Missouri

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Superintendent  
Whittier City School District  
Whittier, California

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Superintendent  
Scott Valley Unified School District  
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Superintendent  
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District  
Cresco, Iowa

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
Bruning–Davenport USD  
Davenport, Nebraska

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
Minatare Public Schools  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Litchfield, Connecticut

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Chief Executive Officer  
Democracy Prep Public Schools  
New York, New York

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
Middletown  
Middletown, New York

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Superintendent  
mMooreville Graded School District  
Mooreville, North Carolina

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Superintendent  
Highline Public Schools  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Lockwood, California

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Superintendent  
Evergreen  
San Jose, California

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Interim Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
Graduation Achievement Charter High School  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
San Diego Unified  
San Diego, California

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Chesterfield, Missouri

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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School District  
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Beaufort, South Carolina

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Poyen, Arkansas

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Superintendent  
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Noblesville, Indiana

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Kintersville, Pennsylvania

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Superintendent  
Liberty Union–Thurston Local School District  
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Superintendent  
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Fallbrook, California

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Vermilion, Ohio

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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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R. Matthew Plater  
Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
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Bloomington, Illinois

L. Chris Richardson  
Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
Fairview Area Schools  
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Superintendent  
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Bald Knob, Arkansas

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South Fayette Township School District  
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Superintendent  
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Superintendent  
Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley  
Regional School District  
Somerset, Massachusetts

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Superintendent  
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Bedford, Virginia

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Superintendent  
Coast Unified School District  
Cambria, California

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Superintendent  
Bettendorf Community School District  
Bettendorf, Indiana

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Superintendent  
School District of Alma  
Alma, Wisconsin

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Superintendent  
Gower School District 62  
Willowbrook, Illinois

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Superintendent  
North Providence School District  
North Providence, Rhode Island

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Superintendent  
Metropolitan School District of Lawrence  
Township  
Indianapolis, Indiana

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Superintendent  
Porterville Unified School District  
Porterville, California

Lisa Snyder  
Superintendent  
Lakeville Area Public Schools  
Lakeville, Minnesota

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Superintendent  
Alton School District  
Alton, Illinois

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Superintendent  
Wright Elementary School District  
Santa Rosa, California

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Superintendent  
Yuma Elementary School District One  
Yuma, Arizona

Joe Stutting  
Superintendent  
North Scott School District  
Eldridge, Iowa

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Superintendent  
Indian Prairie District 204  
Aurora, Illinois

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Superintendent  
Elkhorn Area School District  
Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Richard Tardalo  
Superintendent  
Clifton Public Schools  
Clifton, New Jersey

Diane Tavenner  
Founder & CEO  
Summit Public Schools  
Redwood City, California

James Terry  
Superintendent  
Beaver County School District  
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Superintendent  
Escambia County School District  
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Superintendent  
Nett Lake District  
Nett Lake, Minnesota

Tony Thomas  
Superintendent  
Salina Public Schools  
Salina, Oklahoma

David Toth  
Superintendent  
Crestwood Local  
Mantua, Ohio

Laura VanDuyn  
Superintendent  
Cedar Springs Public Schools  
Cedar Springs, Michigan

Cherie Vannatter  
Superintendent  
Manchester Community Schools  
Manchester, Michigan

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Superintendent  
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Vista, California

Nancy Wagner  
Superintendent  
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Beach Park, Illinois

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Superintendent  
Spring Independent School District  
Houston, Texas

Sandra Weaver  
Superintendent  
Metropolitan School District of Wabash County  
Wabash, Indiana

Freddie Williamson  
Superintendent  
Hoke County Schools  
Raeford, North Carolina

Corbin Witt  
Superintendent  
Geary County, USD 475  
Junction City, Kansas

Carol Woodbury  
Superintendent  
Dennis–Yarmouth Regional School District  
South Yarmouth, Massachusetts

Michael Zoerhoff  
Superintendent  
Kentwood Public Schools  
Kentwood, Michigan

Jeffrey Zwiebel  
Superintendent  
Pottsville Area School District  
Pottsville, Pennsylvania