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For Immediate Release

FCC APPROVES FINAL RULES TO SUPPORT WI-FI HOTSPOTS THROUGH E-RATE PROGRAM

Modernization of Program Will Help Library Patrons and Students Bridge Homework Gap and Learn Without Limits

WASHINGTON, July 18, 2024—Today, the Federal Communications Commission voted to approve final rules to support the students, school staff, and library patrons around the country who find themselves on the wrong side of the digital and educational divide. Now, schools and libraries will be able to utilize E-Rate resources to loan out Wi-Fi hotspots which will provide internet access for those individuals without a reliable connection at home.

Established in 1996, the E-Rate program has provided discounts to assist schools and libraries in obtaining affordable telecommunications and internet access. Over the years, the program has been modernized to focus support on bringing high-speed broadband to and within schools and libraries. Today's action will help students gain access to educational resources that may have been previously out of reach and enable them to learn without limits.

Today's Report and Order takes the next step towards modernizing the E-Rate program to ensure students, school staff, and library patrons can have the internet access needed for a 21st century quality education, and will:

- Allow schools and libraries to use E-Rate funding to loan out Wi-Fi hotspots and support high-speed internet access for students, school staff, and library patrons in both rural and urban parts of the country.
- Adopt a budget mechanism that sets a limit on the amount of support that an applicant can request for Wi-Fi hotspots and services over a three-year period. In the event that demand for E-Rate support exceeds available funding in a given funding year, eligible on-premises category one and category two equipment and service requests will be prioritized and funded before eligible off-premises equipment and service requests.
- Adopt numerous safeguards to protect the integrity of the E-Rate program, including measures to ensure the supported Wi-Fi hotspots and services are in use, are used for educational purposes, are not funded through other sources, and are properly documented for auditing purposes.
- Require compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act.

Action by the Commission July 18, 2024 by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 24-76). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Starks and Gomez approving. Commissioners Carr and Simington dissenting. Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington issuing separate statements.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).