July 15, 2014

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our opposition to any E-rate amendment to the Fiscal Year 2015 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill (H. R. 5016).

Enacted by Congress in 1996, the E-rate program has been extremely effective at helping schools and libraries connect to the internet for education purposes. Today, more than 95 percent of schools have some basic internet connectivity, compared to just 14 percent when E-rate was enacted in 1996. Likewise, today most public libraries are connected to the internet with 98 percent offering public internet access. E-rate has been an incredible success and any amendments that could jeopardize further improvements to the program would be shortsighted.

Just this past Friday, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made substantial improvements to E-rate, the first major overhaul of the program in nearly 20 years. The FCC's action will make E-rate more efficient and effective while providing greater Wi-Fi access to millions of students. High-speed internet access, including reliable Wi-Fi, is an essential component of a world-class education in the twenty-first century. The modernization of E-rate is a necessary step toward providing students with the educational infrastructure they need to excel in the modern classroom and Congress should give the reformed E-rate time to be implemented before thwarting its progress.

The internet is the textbook of the twenty-first century, without which the nation's students cannot excel academically today or compete economically in the future. We urge you to oppose any E-rate amendments which could endanger the success of this vital program for our nation's schools and libraries.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Excellent Education
Association of American Publishers
Democrats for Education Reform
Digital Promise
Education Reform Now Advocacy
EduStart
FED ED
International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
Leading Education by Advancing Digital (LEAD) Commission
League of United Latin American Citizens
The Learning Accelerator

Minority Media and Telecommunications Council
National Association of Private Special Education Centers
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Indian Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Association
National Urban League
National Writing Project
The New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute
North Central Ohio Computer Cooperative
Organizations Concerned about Rural Education
ProLiteracy
Rainbow PUSH Coalition
Rural School and Community Trust
State Educational Technology Directors Association
Young Adult Library Services Association
Webster County Schools