

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries)	WC Docket No. 13-184
)	
A National Broadband Plan For Our Future)	GN Docket No. 09-51
)	
Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism)	CC Docket No. 02-6
)	

**COMMENTS OF THE MINORITY MEDIA AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL
AND THE RAINBOW PUSH COALITION**

The Minority Media and Telecommunications Council and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, (collectively “MMTC”) respectfully submit these comments in reply to the Public Notice released by the Wireline Competition Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) on August 4, 2014 seeking comment on the draft Eligible Services List (“ESL”) for the E-rate program.¹

Over the past year the FCC has taken important steps to modernize the E-rate program and heighten its focus on providing support for high-speed, high-capacity broadband in schools and libraries.² The ESL Public Notice is the most recent of the FCC’s efforts to streamline the application process for eligible entities, and it introduces many useful reforms. In particular,

¹ Wireline Competition Bureau Seeks Comment on Draft Eligible Services List for Schools and Libraries Universal Service Program, CC Docket No. 02-6, GN Docket No. 09-51, WC Docket No. 13-184, *Public Notice*, DA 14-1130 (rel. Aug. 4, 2014) (“*Public Notice*”).

² *See, e.g.*, Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries, WC Docket No. 13-184, *Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, FCC 14-99 (rel. Jul. 23, 2014).

allowing eligible entities to apply separately for E-rate support for network equipment and for the installation, activation, and initial configuration of eligible services will benefit many schools and libraries that might not otherwise have access to local firms capable of providing both hardware and support services.³ MMTC also supports the phasing out of outdated legacy services such as paging services and directory assistance, which will free up limited funds for implementing high-capacity networks in classrooms and library buildings.⁴

Although many of the changes the FCC seeks to implement are laudable, MMTC remains concerned that the structure of the draft ESL remains excessively complicated and could serve as an unwelcome barrier for under-resourced schools and libraries that already struggle to comply with the E-rate application process. For example, distinguishing between ESL categories such as “eligible broadband internal connections components” and “eligible managed internal broadband services,” requires a sophisticated understanding of network components that may not be available to all eligible entities. MMTC encourages the FCC to find additional ways to simplify the categories of components and services supported by the E-rate program to make them accessible to eligible entities that lack access to the services of legal counsel or specialized consultants.⁵

³ See *Public Notice* at 2.

⁴ See Comments of Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, WC Docket No. 13-184 at 14-15 (filed Sept. 16, 2013) (“Sept. 16 Comments”).

⁵ A more troubling issue highlighted by the ESL is the FCC’s retention of a distinction between “category one” and “category two” services. MMTC feels strongly that a prioritized funding structure creates inherent uncertainty in technological planning, because schools and libraries have no way of knowing if their category two requests will be funded from year to year, and additionally sets up a roadblock to deploying internal connections in school buildings. See Comments of the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, WC Docket No. 13-184 at 3 (filed Apr. 7, 2014). MMTC plans to file comments in response to the pending Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking addressing the need for the FCC to unify the E-rate funding structure and eliminate funding prioritization, which will reduce administrative complexity and encourage broadband deployment.

As with all aspects of the E-rate program, the FCC should continue to actively seek out opportunities to streamline the application process, including through revisions to the ESL, to ensure that no school or library is forced to pass up critical funding for high-capacity broadband because the E-rate application process is too complex, time-consuming, or resource-intensive.⁶

Respectfully submitted,

**MINORITY MEDIA AND
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THE RAINBOW PUSH COALITION**

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⁶ See Sept. 16 Comments at 25.