

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

The E-Rate program is essential for providing internet connectivity to the nation's schools and libraries. These institutions are vital outlets to connect all Americans, including millions of Americans in rural parts of the country. For many communities, these schools and libraries are the only source of free public internet access. We write to encourage you to support this vital source of funding that benefits children across America.

Congress established the E-Rate program in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and since then it has been a huge success. When we created the E-Rate, barely 14 percent of classrooms had access to the internet. Today, nearly all schools around the country are connected, and the internet is now a standard part of the learning experience. The E-Rate ensures that students from working-class and rural neighborhoods can connect to and be afforded all of the opportunities given to students from more affluent communities. With technology expanding into nearly every facet of our lives, we need to ensure all Americans – whether urban or rural, rich or poor – remain connected and competitive in this global economy by continuing to support this essential program that millions of kids rely on across the nation.

We are proud of the extraordinary history of this program and we want to ensure that its future is even brighter. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that the E-Rate remains strong for generations to come, just as Congress intended when we put the E-Rate into law over two decades ago.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator