



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

June 4, 2014

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Thank you for your efforts to strengthen and modernize the E-Rate program to meet the modern digital connectivity needs of American schools and libraries. I share your desire to rapidly expand high-speed broadband connections to all eligible providers.

As you move forward with these efforts, I encourage you to consider flexible approaches that may allow enhanced broadband connectivity in traditionally underserved areas. In Florida, for example, a number of schools and libraries in the Panhandle and central part of the State currently have limited access to affordable, high-capacity broadband connections to serve their increasing needs. It is my understanding that three Florida rural educational consortia recently highlighted these challenges to Commission staff at a May 6, 2014, E-Rate Modernization Workshop.

I urge you to consider the views of these three Florida rural educational consortia. Specifically, the Commission may want to consider allowing these entities, when they are unable to receive bids for competitively priced services, to use E-Rate funds for certain connections between impacted rural schools and libraries in their communities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these concerns, and for your continued support of a robust E-Rate program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the "N".