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PENNSYLVANIA

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 10, 2014

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
450 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I am writing to follow up on my May 2014 letter regarding reforms to the E-rate program. I appreciate your response to the views expressed in that letter.

I understand that the Federal Communications Commission will vote on proposed changes to the E-rate system on July 11, 2014. While I applaud your efforts to ensure that the program enhance school technology capability, I would like to reiterate my strong concern regarding proposals to eliminate the funding of web hosting services for schools.

As I noted in my earlier letter, it is my understanding that a number of schools both in Pennsylvania and nationwide will face significant challenges in maintaining websites without the use of E-rate funding. These websites allow schools and school districts to communicate with students, parents and faculty, including regarding emergencies and provides accessible digital learning resources. This is particularly critical for rural or underserved schools which might not otherwise be able to provide access to such resources. Furthermore, I have been informed that schools utilizing E-rate funds for webhosting on average pay less for webhosting services than schools not using E-rate.

Finally, with respect to the availability of free webhosting services, school leaders have raised concerns related to the potential for data mining and other student privacy implications. It is critical that students are able to use digital learning tools and access information online without jeopardizing the privacy of minors.

I urge you to consider the importance of webhosting for school services and family engagement as well as the critical role of E-rate funding in providing such services to schools in the Commonwealth and across the Nation.

Thank you for your time and attention to my concerns.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator