



## NEBRASKA EDUCATIONAL SERVICE UNIT 2

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TO: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
FROM: Dr. Ted Deturk, Administrator  
Educational Service Unit #2

RE: Docket NUSF-117

The Educational Service Unit (ESU) system in Nebraska has served school districts for over 50 years. During this time, technology has become a mainstay to the services provided. Further during this time, the division of schools with fiber and those without has grown. During this investigative period by the Public Service Commission, it is my duty to share that 14 school districts across the state do not have access to fiber lines; these districts range from Bennington to Valentine. As the Chair of the Informational Resources Committee for the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council (ESUCC), I am writing this letter in support of the Public Service Commission (Commission). I ask the Commission to include schools in the Nebraska Universal Service matching funds program so that it aligns directly to the federal program to benefit libraries and schools that currently need fiber optic services to their facilities.

As the Commission is preparing to rule on a special construction matching funds program, I ask that you consider the LB 944 Rural Broadband Task Force recommendation and leverage FCC E-rate matching funds for the construction of new fiber. This will help pay for the non-recurring costs to E-Rate eligible entities that lack that service due to high cost or unavailability. LB 992 "...establishes the Nebraska E-Rate Special Construction Matching Fund Program to begin July 1, 2021." LB 992 further states that, "...telecommunication carriers to deploy fiber optic cable for the benefit of public library access to E-Rate special construction matching funding."

Each ESU provides E-rate assistance to schools and therefore understand the need to expand fiber to ALL schools. ESU's understand that with current language, schools have been excluded from the matching funds program. While LB 992 did not specifically mention schools as a beneficiary of this funding, we support the need of non-fiber schools as eligible entities in the FCCs special construction matching fund program and that Nebraska, through the Commission's ruling, should align its program to the same criteria to benefit all E-Rate eligible entities within the state. Neb. Rev. State. 86-323 provides that, "(6) Elementary and secondary schools, libraries, and providers of health care to rural areas should have access to advanced telecommunications services...."

Because of the obligation stated in the statute quoted above, and that the FCC matching fund program for E-rate eligible entities includes schools and libraries in its program, we implore the Commission to include schools in the final program criteria so that the Nebraska Universal Service matching funds program aligns directly to the federal program to benefit libraries and schools that currently need fiber optic services to their facilities.

