

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska Public)	
Service Commission, on its own Motion)	Docket NUSF-117
to consider implementing a program to)	
incentivize new fiber construction for)	March 19, 2020
E-rate eligible entities.)	

REPLY COMMENTS FROM THE NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Public Service Commission (Commission) is preparing to rule on a special construction matching funds program recommended by the LB 944 Rural Broadband Task Force to leverage FCC E-Rate matching funds in 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.”

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) employs the Nebraska State E-Rate Coordinator who assists schools with E-Rate specific filings, trainings, FCC regulations and so on. NDE observes 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, NDE supports the needs 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 school and libraries in its program, NDE implores 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.

Respectfully submitted,

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