Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

_____
)
In the Matter of   )
)   WC Docket No. 13-184
Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools   )
and Libraries   )
_____)

REPLY COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED
ELIGIBLE SERVICES LIST FOR FY 2021
(WC Docket 13-184; DA 20-767)

The State E-Rate Coordinators' Alliance ("SECA") submits these Reply Comments in support of the principles espoused in the Petition for Waiver submitted by Cisco Systems, Inc. ("Cisco") in its initial Comments on the FCC's draft Eligible Services List for FY 2021.

SECA recognizes that Cisco's Petition was not explicitly filed in response to the Commission's request for comment on the Eligible Services List for FY 2021 but that the timing and nature of the Petition were and are closely aligned. SECA, therefore, is responding to the Cisco Petition as an ESL Reply Comment.

SECA concurs with Cisco's position to allow the use of E-rate Category 2 funding to cover the cost of advanced network protection technology.

Most specifically, SECA agrees with Cisco that school and library networks have become increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks. Although the shift to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic may have accelerated cyberattacks on schools and libraries, expensive and disruptive instances of viruses, malware, ransomware, denial of service attacks, and unauthorized network intrusions had already become far too common before the pandemic.

SECA also agrees with Cisco that the new — and now permanent — fixed Category 2 budgets limit any adverse impact of adding additional Category 2 services to the Eligible Services List. Instead, as Cisco notes, "they merely give schools and libraries greater flexibility to spend their budgeted amounts on much-needed security services if they choose to do so."[1]

SECA does <u>not</u> believe that E-rate support for advanced network protection technology is only a two-year, pandemic-related, requirement. Network security had become a major problem before the emergence of COVID-19 and will remain so beyond the pandemic.

Just prior to this year's COVID-19 outbreak, the K-12 Cybersecurity Resource Center released a report entitled The State of K-12 Cybersecurity: 2019 Year in Review. The report indicated that public K-12 education entities across the country experienced a total of 348 cybersecurity incidents during calendar year 2019. This was nearly three times as many incidents as were publicly-disclosed during 2018. Many of these incidents were significant, resulting in the theft of millions of taxpayer dollars, stolen identities, and the denial of access to school technology and IT systems for weeks or longer. This number of cybersecurity incidents does not include the more numerous unreported events that schools are not legally required to report.

---

[1] Such flexibility is consistent with the Commission's *United Talmudical Academy* decision (FCC 00-2) stating: "We find that SLD should not be placed in a position of making such choices on behalf of applicants. To do so would be contrary to the policies and objectives underlying the schools and libraries support mechanism, under which the Commission has determined that individual schools and libraries, not SLD, are best positioned to determine their support needs in light of their particular technological capabilities and educational needs."

SECA believes that the draft Eligible Services List for FY 2021, if properly interpreted, already provides the basis for funding firewalls with advanced network protection technology. A separate waiver, as proposed by Cisco, may not be needed.

The list of Category 2 eligible broadband Internal Connections equipment in the draft Eligible Services List for FY 2021, includes the language:

- Firewall services and components separate from basic firewall protection provided as a standard component of a vendor's Internet access service.

For this reason, SECA is unconvinced that a waiver, as suggested by Cisco, is necessary to support the eligibility of more advanced network protection technology as Category 2 equipment or services at least with respect to advanced firewall features. What is required, assuming the Commission agrees with the need and desirability of funding advanced technology, is Commission guidance to USAC as to the limits, if any, of Category 2 firewall eligibility.

Conclusions:

SECA shares Cisco's concerns with the vulnerability of school and library networks in an era of growing cyberattacks. It makes no sense to expend precious E-rate funds on broadband networks if those networks cannot be protected. SECA understands the practicality of limiting Category 1 funding to basic firewall services but argues that schools and libraries are best equipped and incentivized to determine the best trade-offs in the use of their limited Category 2 budgets. Properly interpreted, the current language on the eligibility of firewall services for Category 2, as opposed to the limiting "basic" firewall language for Category 1, will support the much needed E-rate funding for modern network security services.

Respectfully Submitted by:

/s/ Debra Kriete

Debra M. Kriete, Chair
State E-Rate Coordinators' Alliance

South Dakota State E-Rate Coordinator
1300 Bent Creek Blvd., Suite 102
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
(717) 232-0222
dmkriete@comcast.net

September 4, 2020

For assistance with using ECFS, please contact the ECFS Help Desk at 202-418-0193 (tel:+12024180193) or via email at ECFSHelp@fcc.gov (mailto:ECFSHelp@fcc.gov).

Submit a Filing

1 Filing 2 Review 3 Confirmation

Proceeding:	13-184
Confirmation #:	2020090465392117
Submitted:	Sep 4, 2020 4:01:53 PM
Status:	RECEIVED
Name(s) of Filer(s)	State E-Rate Coordinators' Alliance
Law Firm(s)	
Attorney/Author Name(s)	Debra M. Kriete
Primary Contact Email	dmkriete@comcast.net
Type of Filing	REPLY
File Number	
Report Number	
Bureau ID Number	
Address of	Filer
Address	South Dakota State E-Rate Coordinator 1300 Bent Creek Blvd., Suite 102, Mechanicsburg, PA, 17050
Email Confirmation	Yes

Submit Another ↻ (/ecfs/filings)

For assistance with using ECFS, please contact the ECFS Help Desk at 202-418-0193 (tel:+12024180193) or via email at ECFSHelp@fcc.gov (mailto:ECFSHelp@fcc.gov).

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554

Phone: 1-888-225-5322

TTY: 1-888-835-5322

ASL Video Call: 1-844-432-2275

ASL Call Portal (Web)

Fax: 1-866-418-0232

Contact Us (https://www.fcc.gov/contact-us)