March 10, 2025

Dear U.S. Senators,

The organizations below urge you to vote against S.J.Res.7, a Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution that would overturn the Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate hotspot decision last year. The FCC's Order allows schools and libraries to obtain E-Rate funding to provide wireless internet hotspot devices and service to students, school staff, and library patrons. Almost 20,000 schools and libraries across the country are currently in the process of applying for several hundred thousand hotspots, which often have multiple users. **This resolution, if passed, would prevent millions of students and library patrons across the country from obtaining internet access.**

Research studies point to the importance of anywhere, anytime learning. A 2021 Common Sense Media report estimates between 9 million and 15 million U.S. students fall into the persistent digital divide and lack adequate internet access at home. **Hotspots address this problem head-on by allowing children and adult learners to do their schoolwork online outside the classroom**, giving them access to digital textbooks, research tools, virtual tutoring, college prep courses, and other online educational programs that enhance student success. Furthermore, teachers' abilities to assign homework is severely limited by lack of off-campus access. For example, 40% of Title I school teachers say that they "do not assign work that requires internet access because they fear that doing so would exacerbate inequalities." Additionally, non-traditional students such as adult learners, individuals building skills for college and career, and English-learners also benefit from hotspots. The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) found "there was more internet traffic outside of school hours than . . . during school hours." Connectivity after school hours is essential for learning and hotspots are a key strategy to fill that need.

In addition to the educational benefits above, hotspots provide a number of other benefits to the community. For instance, hotspots:

- allow elderly people and those in rural communities to engage in remote telehealth,
- allow veterans to obtain financial services and medical support,
- allow jobseekers and aspiring entrepreneurs to practice digital skills, obtain jobs, and start their own businesses, and
- allow access to emergency life-saving services, especially during natural disasters.

Hotspots promote safe, filtered access for minors in accordance with federal law. Under the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), schools and libraries must adopt an internet safety policy to ensure that hotspots block access to material deemed "harmful to minors". In fact, filtering technologies are built into the hotspot solution, and most schools go further than what CIPA requires to block access to all non-educational websites. If the FCC's program is overturned, school children will seek other ways to access the internet that do not have these filtering protections.

- Jill Hobson, chief technology officer at Gainesville City Schools (GA), said on a [recent webinar](#): "These devices that go home are not being used by family members to stream a television show or a movie. They're not being used for online gaming. That's not possible. Those kinds of things are blocked from use."

Lending out hotspots is a proven technology. Nearly half (46.9%) of [public libraries now offer Wi-Fi hotspots](#) for checkout, a 14.6% increase since 2020, highlighting continued demand. Since at least 2015, libraries and schools have developed lending practices that reduce theft and loss, and promote fair circulation policies. For instance,

- The Nelson Public Library in rural Princeton, Texas, provided a hotspot to a college student who tore her ACL and meniscus. Due to her injury she had to stay home, but there was no internet at her home. She was able to do schoolwork because of the hotspot that the library provided. Hotspots fill a distinct and demonstrated educational need for many communities.

- Schools in Oakland, California [connected 98%](#) of their student population through the distribution of 11,500 Wi-Fi hotspots and connected devices.

The hotspot program is not a partisan program. In fact, schools and libraries in 46 of the 50 states have submitted hotspot applications in the current E-rate application window.

The FCC's hotspot program is well-designed and fiscally responsible. The FCC set a three-year cap on the amount of funding available to each school and library. Based on current applications, the program will cost about $200 million per year, which can be accommodated within the current E-Rate funding cap. Schools and libraries must monitor usage to make sure that the hotspots are actually used and not warehoused. The program requires schools and libraries to pay a portion of the cost based on the FCC's traditional E-Rate matrix. Applicants are also subject to audits and enforcement measures to ensure they comply with the FCC's rules.

The FCC's decision is authorized by the statutory language in the Communications Act. The statute does not limit support to classrooms. In fact, E-Rate has supported internet access in administrative offices, parking lots, and library bookmobiles for several years, even though they are not "classrooms."

Several [provisions](#) of the Communications Act authorize the FCC to provide E-Rate funding for learning off-campus, including sections 254(b)(6), 254(c)(1), 254(c)(3), 254(h)(1)(B) and 254(h)(2)(A).

The Digital Divide continues to be a significant problem that hotspots can address. According to [Pew](#), 21% of households still do not subscribe to broadband internet service at home, largely because it is too expensive. Now that the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) have both expired, the E-Rate hotspot lending program is an important and fiscally prudent tool to address the "Homework Gap" and bring affordable wireless internet to millions of students and families who need help.

Finally, we suggest that the Federal Communications Commission, under the leadership of Chairman Carr, can address the future of the E-Rate hotspot lending program at a later date. Deferring to the FCC will allow time for more public discussion and not harm the almost 20,000 schools and libraries nationwide that are in the process of submitting hotspot applications in the current E-Rate funding year.

Please vote NO on S.J. Res.7.

AASA, The School Superintendents Association (AASA)
All4Ed
American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Library Association (ALA)
American Psychological Association (APA)
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA)
Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International
Benton Institute for Broadband and Society
Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)
Common Sense Media
Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
Consortium of State School Boards Associations (COSSBA)
Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
Council of the Great City Schools
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS)
National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)
National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA)
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
National Education Association (NEA)
National League of Cities (NLC)
National PTA
National Rural Education Association (NREA)
National School Boards Association (NSBA)
Open Technology Institute at New America (OTI)
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB)
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)