July 15, 2014

Speaker John Boehner  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Member of Congress:

I am writing on behalf the thousands of school district technology leaders that are members of the Consortium for School Networking to urge you to oppose any amendment to limit the E-rate program's ability to meet the broadband needs of the nation's students during consideration of the Fiscal Year 2015 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill (H. R. 5016). Such action would curtail the delivery of high capacity broadband to millions of students at a time when technology is needed most in the nation's classrooms.

New technologies offer the promise to prepare students for success in post secondary education and careers after graduation by helping teachers customize instruction, offering access to rich and dynamic digital content and resources, and supporting hands on learning designed to equip students with the skills they need to succeed. Cutting edge technologies, however, require the presence of high capacity broadband, which is woefully absent in many American classrooms. CoSN's 2013 E-rate and broadband survey showed that this is not only a broadband problem, but also an internal connections problem. For example, approximately 40% of classrooms lack wireless Internet connectivity. This troubling broadband and wifi gap is particularly pronounced in rural areas and high poverty communities where jobs are scarce and opportunities to learn are limited.

We encourage you to oppose any such amendment and hope Congress will instead take steps to help, not hinder, the FCC's efforts to connect all students to the high capacity broadband services needed to ensure they are ready for success after graduation.

Sincerely,

Keith Krueger  
CEO
CoSN Survey Highlights Need for Greater E-rate Funding and Overwhelming Lack of Broadband in Classrooms Survey of 460 Districts Shows Access, Connectivity, and Network Design Challenges

Washington, DC (October 16, 2013) – The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN), in partnership with MDR (Market Data Retrieval), today released the final results of its first-ever E-rate and broadband survey on the challenges K-12 schools nationwide face with growing demand of digital learning environments. With more than 460 responses from 44 states, 43 percent of districts said none of their schools meet the broadband goal of 100Mbps of Internet access per 1,000 students today. The 100Mbps goal has been advocated by the State Education Technology Directors Association (SETDA) and the LEAD Commission Blueprint, as well as reinforced by President Obama’s ConnectED initiative.

The survey, which was conducted from August to September, seeks to inform critical choices the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) should make in the coming months regarding the E-rate program.

“The survey documents the overwhelming need for investing in better school infrastructure, from broadband to wireless access to overall network design. This should be a wake-up call for the Federal Communications Commission to double the funding of the E-rate program and enable a digital learning environment for all students that meet the needs of today and tomorrow,” said Keith R. Krueger, CEO of CoSN.

Nearly one-third of those surveyed said they did not apply for some of the E-rate program’s funding due to anticipated shortfalls in funding. Bandwidth was identified as the most important priority for the E-rate program, followed by wireless in schools, as well as school Local Area Network (LAN) connectivity and district Wide Area Network (WAN) connectivity.

The results also revealed that average school network cannot support broadband due to poor and outdated internal connections / wiring, backbone in the school LAN and lack of sufficient wireless access points:

- 57 percent of districts do not believe their school’s wireless networks have the capacity to currently handle a 1:1 deployment.
- Half of the wiring in school buildings is older, slower wiring (Cat5 and Cat3) that will not carry data at broadband speeds.
- 26 percent of districts are using slower copper or 2.3 percent wireless backbones in their school LAN.
Other key survey findings include:

- Only 57 percent of elementary schools and 64 percent of secondary schools have all classrooms fully equipped with wireless Internet connectivity.
- 45 percent of districts participate in consortium buying, including 37 percent for Internet bandwidth, and overall nearly 44 percent of districts participate in more than one purchasing cooperative.
- Rural schools pay six times more for connections than other schools / school systems. Likewise, very large school districts (+50K students) spend over three times more for WAN than other schools / school systems.
- Schools need both financial support for ongoing monthly costs AND cost of capital or upfront / nonrecurring expenses covered by E-rate if we are to achieve broadband in schools. According to the survey, ongoing monthly costs (79 percent agreement) and cost of capital or upfront / nonrecurring expenses (59 percent agreement) are the two biggest barriers for schools.

On September 16, 2013, CoSN released the preliminary key findings from this survey. Below are their final results with 469 districts responding (vs. previously 447). There was no substantial change from the preliminary key findings:

- 99 percent of districts need additional Internet bandwidth and connectivity in the next 36 months.
- 93 percent percent of districts believe current E-rate funding does not fully meet their district’s needs.
- 20 percent of districts identified geography as a barrier to increasing connectivity in their schools, and 10.5 percent indicated their Internet providers were either at capacity or could not expand capacity.

To read the full report, please visit: [www.cosn.org/eratesurvey](http://www.cosn.org/eratesurvey).

**About the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)**

CoSN is the premier professional association for school system technology leaders. The mission of CoSN is to empower educational leaders to leverage technology to realize engaging learning environments. Visit [www.cosn.org](http://www.cosn.org) or call 866-267-08747 to find out more about CoSN’s [focus areas, annual conference and events, advocacy and policy, membership](http://www.cosn.org) and the [CETL certification exam](http://www.cosn.org).