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**CHAIRWOMAN ROSENWORCEL PROPOSES FINAL RULES TO
SUPPORT WI-FI HOTSPOTS THROUGH E-RATE PROGRAM**

*Modernization of Program Would Help Students Bridge Homework Gap and Learn
Without Limits*

WASHINGTON, June 26, 2024—Today, millions of students, school staff, and library patrons around the country are on the wrong side of the digital and educational divide and, as a result, lack the same access to educational resources as their peers. To ensure these individuals are not falling behind, Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today shared a proposal that, if adopted, would make the off-premises use of Wi-Fi hotspots and wireless internet services eligible for E-Rate funding.

“It should be the standard practice that students or anyone who can’t afford internet at home can check out a Wi-Fi hotspot from their local library,” **said Chairwoman Rosenworcel**. “This update is how we’ll help close the Homework Gap and support folks on the wrong side of the digital divide so they can fully participate in modern civic and commercial life.”

“Whether at school, a library, or now at home, the E-Rate program gives students and educators a ticket to learning, growing, and connecting to opportunity through internet access. E-Rate is a critical piece of infrastructure that is helping close the digital divide for students and educators in an increasingly online learning environment. I applaud Chairwoman Rosenworcel and the FCC’s effort to modernize the program, which I was proud to author more than two decades ago. I look forward to working with the Commission and my colleagues to see this necessary update to E-Rate come to fruition,” **said Senator Markey**.

Since 1996, the E-Rate program has provided discounts to assist schools and libraries in obtaining affordable telecommunications and internet access. Over the years, the program has been modernized to focus support on bringing high-speed broadband to and within schools.

The Affordable Connectivity Program, which established the country’s largest broadband affordability program, helped connect 23 million households to high-speed internet at home. Now that that program has ended, many impacted households may now need to turn to local schools or libraries to stay connected for education.

The Report and Order, if adopted by a vote of the full Commission at its July 18 Open Meeting, would take the next step towards modernizing the program to ensure all students and library patrons have access to the internet access needed for a 21st century quality education, including:

- Allow schools and libraries to use E-Rate funding to loan out Wi-Fi hotspots and support high-speed internet access for students, school staff, and library patrons in both rural and urban parts of the country.

- Adopt a budget mechanism that sets a limit on the amount of support that an applicant can request for Wi-Fi hotspots and services over a three-year period. In the event that demand for E-Rate support exceeds available funding in a given funding year, eligible off-premises equipment and service requests will be funded after eligible on-premises category one and category two equipment and service requests.
- Adopt numerous safeguards to protect the integrity of the E-Rate program, including measures to ensure the supported Wi-Fi hotspots and services are in use, are used for educational purposes, are not funded through other sources, and are properly documented for auditing purposes.
- Require compliance with the Children’s Internet Protection Act.

Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel’s Learn Without Limits initiative is addressing the Homework Gap by ensuring connectivity in schools and libraries so everyone, everywhere has access to high-speed internet services. Learn Without Limits includes this proposed Wi-Fi hotspots program, the recently adopted schools and libraries cybersecurity pilot program, support for Wi-Fi on school buses, and E-Rate support for libraries in Tribal communities. The draft of the proposed rules will be published tomorrow on the Commission’s website at <https://www.fcc.gov/july-2024-open-commission-meeting>.

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*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*