SHLB
SCHOOLS, HEALTH & LIBRARIES BROADBAND COALITION

POLICY ROADMAP 2019

APRIL 2019

THE SCHOOLS, HEALTH & LIBRARIES BROADBAND COALITION

PROMOTING OPEN, AFFORDABLE, HIGH-QUALITY BROADBAND FOR ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

POLICY PRIORITIES

Mission: "For every anchor institution in the country to have affordable, high quality broadband that serves the needs of the institution and is open and accessible by the surrounding community."

This document sets forth six policy priorities for the SHLB Coalition agenda in the year 2019. SHLB achieved several victories in 2018, and intends to build on these advancements in the following areas:

GOAL #1: MORE FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS TO SUPPORT RURAL TELEHEALTH NETWORKS

- SHLB was successful in convincing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to raise the $400 million cap on the Rural Health Care (RHC) program to $581 million in 2018, and to fully fund the 2018 applications facing a 15 - 20 percent funding reduction.
- SHLB will continue working with the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to more broadly reform and improve application processing, to address open issues with the program, and secure more long-term funding.
- SHLB will comment in the FCC proceeding to reform the RHC program, which FCC Chairman Pai pledged to complete in the first half of 2019.

GOAL #2: UPGRADE E-RATE TO IMPROVE APPLICATION PROCESSING AND EMBRACE COST-EFFECTIVENESS

- SHLB will continue advocating for greater E-rate funding support to promote fiber deployment to underserved schools and libraries, as well as internal connections (Category 2).
- The FCC adopted several SHLB recommendations in 2014, but these policies are up for evaluation in 2019.
- SHLB will develop information and file comments in support of greater funding for Category 2.
- Policies should allow fiber providers to deploy additional fiber strands beyond those used by the school or library, enabling the anchors to share their capacity with the surrounding community. Cost allocation ensures that the incremental costs of this additional capacity are not funded by E-rate.
- The FCC may soon consider whether Wi-Fi on school buses and/or cloud-based services should be eligible for E-rate support. The SHLB Coalition will actively participate in this conversation.

GOAL #3: FEDERAL FUNDING FOR BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IMPROVES ANCHOR CONNECTIVITY

- SHLB continues supporting the National Broadband Plan Goal #4, which calls for anchor institutions to have gigabit speeds by 2020, but a high percentage of anchors will likely fail to meet the goal without additional financial support.
- Deploying fiber and high-speed wireless services to anchor institutions promotes economic growth, helps solve the digital divide, and provides a platform for innovation and opportunity that will strengthen America.
- The SHLB Coalition will draft and submit legislation for Congress to promote greater federal funding for broadband infrastructure that serves anchors and communities. The legislation will also support digital inclusion, broadband mapping and research, and wireless connectivity.
- SHLB will actively participate in the federal legislative debates concerning infrastructure and emphasize the importance of ensuring a comprehensive broadband infrastructure to connect all anchors and Americans.

GOAL #4: PROMOTE COMPETITION AND ADDITIONAL SERVICES THROUGH LICENSED AND UNLICENSED SPECTRUM

- The FCC should make more spectrum available for both unlicensed and licensed broadband services.
- The FCC should make available a minimum of three channels for unlicensed TV White Space (TVWS) spectrum in each market. The SHLB Coalition seeks to promote greater TVWS use.
- The SHLB Coalition opposes the proposal to auction Educational Broadband Services (EBS) licenses, and will advocate to maintain the educational use of this spectrum before the FCC and Congress.
- SHLB supports the FCC proposal to make 6GHz spectrum available for unlicensed use to address the shortage of Wi-Fi spectrum, and to protect the needs of existing users of this band.

GOAL #5: STREAMLINE THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUNDING

- Building broadband infrastructure that can support multiple Universal Service Fund (USF) projects is good public policy, yet today's applicants must submit separate, complex applications for each USF program, perpetuating funding "silos."
- Many unserved communities could become attractive to serve if applicants could file a single application to build USF-funded shared networks serving multiple anchor institutions.
- SHLB will draft and file a petition for rulemaking, asking the FCC to establish a test pilot program to enable applicants to submit one application to obtain USF funding for a variety of qualifying projects.

GOAL #6: MORE ACCURATE MAPPING DATA THAT INCLUDES ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

- The FCC's broadband map and data collection lacks adequate information about anchor instititutions.
- Previous efforts to map broadband services for anchor institutions have led to inconsistent results, because the information wasn't collected in a uniform manner.
- The SHLB Coalition will continue to support a consistent methodology to collect more accurate and more granular data regarding broadband availability and usage by anchor institutions and their communities.

ABOUT SHLB

The SHLB Coalition is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) advocacy organization that supports open, affordable, high-quality broadband connections for anchor institutions and their surrounding communities. The SHLB Coalition is based in Washington, D.C. and has a diverse membership of commercial and non-commercial organizations that support our mission from across the United States. We receive financial support from membership dues, from our conferences and events, and from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.