December 1, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC  20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Broadband Mapping and Community Anchor Institutions

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition and the parties listed below write in support of full funding for the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC’s) broadband mapping efforts but only if the Commission includes community anchor institutions in the national broadband map. Anchor institutions include schools, libraries, healthcare providers, higher education institutions, houses of worship, community centers and other public community-based organizations. Congressional language regarding anchor institutions is necessary because the FCC has not specifically proposed to include anchor institutions in its mapping efforts.

We agree with many other parties that the U.S. should gather and display more accurate and more granular broadband information. As others have pointed out, broadband maps are necessary to determine how federal, state and local funding should be directed to areas, communities and locations that currently lack adequate broadband.

Having said that, there are several other equally important reasons for developing more accurate and granular broadband maps. Broadband maps are also important for assessing our economic competitiveness, public safety, education and telehealth services. To answer these questions, we need to know not just whether broadband is available; we need to know about the quality and type of broadband capacity that has been deployed across the country. In other words, measuring broadband should not be a binary analysis; broadband maps must also measure and display the specific locations served, the bandwidth, capacity, mobility, latency and price. As the Benton Institute described in a recent report, we should be focused on ensuring that “high-performance” broadband is ubiquitous and affordable for all.

For example, the National Broadband Plan Goal #4 calls for anchor institutions to have gigabit capacity by the year 2020. We have not met this goal. Even worse, we do not even know how far from this goal we are because we have not collected the information to evaluate the current state of broadband for
anchor institutions. The SHLB Coalition previously issued a report estimating that it would cost between $13 billion to $19 billion to connect all the remaining anchor institutions to fiber. But this report was only an estimate because the data to make a more definitive conclusion is not available.

The legislative history supporting the Broadband DATA Act that Congress enacted earlier this year includes language in the House Energy and Commerce Committee report and a statement on the Senate floor by Senator Ed Markey, one of the co-sponsors of the legislation, asking the FCC to include anchor institutions in the broadband maps. Unfortunately, the most recent proposal from the FCC (released in July 2020) proposes to collect information about residential and business customers but not anchor institutions.

High-quality broadband is especially important for anchor institutions, which rely on connectivity to provide their communities with essential services, such as remote learning, virtual doctor visits, and web-based librarian assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened this need. As Congress considers providing funding to the FCC to gather broadband location information and publish broadband maps, we urge you to add language to ensure that broadband for community anchor institutions is included.

Sincerely,

John Windhausen, Jr.
Executive Director
Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition
Washington, DC

Valerie Oliver
Alaska E-rate Coordinator for Schools and Libraries
Juneau, Alaska

Milan Eaton
State E-rate Director
Arizona Department of Education
Phoenix, Arizona

Derek Masseth
Executive Director
Sun Corridor Network
Tempe, Arizona

Kim Klupenger
President
California Telehealth Network
Sacramento, California

Louis Fox
President & CEO
CENIC
La Mirada, Berkeley, & Sacramento, California

Beverly Sutherland
President & CEO
EdTechnologyFunds, Inc.
Altadena, California

Fred Brakeman
Chief Executive Officer
Infinity Communications & Consulting, Inc.
Bakersfield, California
Rob Jenkins
Director, Broadband Services
Colorado Hospital Association
Greenwood Village, Colorado

Cassie Bair
Chief Business Development Executive
Mobile Citizen
Longmont, Colorado

Tim Miles
Technology Director
South Routt School District
Oak Creek, Colorado

Tim Miles
Technology Director
Steamboat Springs School District
Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Ryan Kocsondy
Director
Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
Hartford, Connecticut

Keith Krueger
CEO
Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
Washington, DC

Susan Benton
President and CEO
Urban Libraries Council
Washington, DC

Larra Clark
Deputy Director, ALA Public Policy & Advocacy Office
American Library Association
Chicago, Illinois

Andrew Jay Schwartzman
Senior Counselor
Benton Institute for Broadband & Society
Evanston, Illinois

J. Brent Legg
Executive Vice President
Government Affairs
Connected Nation
Bowling Green, Kentucky

Christine Fox
Interim Executive Director
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)
Glen Burnie, Maryland

Kurt Mansperger
CTO
Boston Public Library
Boston, Massachusetts

Timothy Cherubini
Executive Director
Chief Officers of State Library Agencies
Williamstown, Massachusetts

Joseph Sawasky
President & CEO
Merit Network
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Carrie Coogan
Deputy Director
Kansas City Public Library
Kansas City, Missouri

Alan Wang
Executive Director
Prairie STEM (Scott Technology Center Location)
Omaha, Nebraska
Roy Hoover  
Network and Telecommunications Coordinator  
Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Ray Timothy  
CEO/Executive Director  
Utah Education and Telehealth Network  
Salt Lake City, Utah

Janice Meyers  
Janice Meyers Educational Consulting, LLC  
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

Jeanne Williams  
Director  
Central Skagit Rural Partial County Library District  
Sedro-Woolley, Washington

Shirley Bauer, Ed.D.  
President  
E-Rate & Educational Services, LLC  
Rapid City, South Dakota

Cindy Altick Aden  
Professor of Practice and Distinguished Practitioner in Residence  
Information School, University of Washington  
Seattle, WA

Kathryn (“Kitty”) Ganier  
General Counsel of ENA and Affiliates  
Nashville, Tennessee

Amy Philipson  
Executive Director  
Pacific Northwest GigaPoP  
Seattle, Washington

Dan Kettwich  
President/CEO  
ADS Advanced Data Services, Inc.  
Mount Pleasant, Texas

Karen Goff  
Executive Secretary  
West Virginia Library Commission  
Charleston, West Virginia

Jacob Bowser  
Director of Technology  
Castleberry Independent School District  
River Oaks, Texas

Kurt Kiefer, Assistant State Superintendent  
Shelley Witte, GIS Technician  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Madison, Wisconsin

Akbar Kara  
President & CEO  
LEARN  
Lubbock, Texas

Dr. Xavier De La Torre  
Superintendent  
Ysleta Independent School District  
El Paso, Texas

Rebecca Dilg  
Rural Outreach Manager  
Governor's Office of Economic Development  
Salt Lake City, Utah