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For Immediate Release

**CHAIRWOMAN ROSENWORCEL CIRCULATES RULING MAKING
WI-FI ON SCHOOL BUSES ELIGIBLE FOR E-RATE FUNDING**

Would Support Needs of Millions of Students in Homework Gap

WASHINGTON, May 11, 2022—In another step to close the Homework Gap, Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today announced a proposal to allow the use of federal funding for Wi-Fi in school buses during a meeting of the National Coalition for Technology in Education & Training. The Declaratory Ruling, if adopted, would allow E-Rate program funding to equip school buses with Wi-Fi, providing substantial benefits to students, including millions of students caught in the Homework Gap. The proposal would clarify that use of Wi-Fi, or similar access point technologies, on school buses serves an educational purpose and the provision of such service is therefore eligible for E-Rate funding.

“While we’ve made progress getting many more families connected through our various broadband funding programs, the Homework Gap is still a hard fact of life for millions of schoolchildren in urban and rural America,” said Chairwoman Rosenworcel. “Wiring our school buses is a practical step we can take that is consistent with the history of the E-rate program. This commonsense change could help kids who have no broadband at home. I look forward to having my colleagues join me in approving this step to support the online educational needs of our nation’s schoolchildren.”

The E-Rate program allows eligible schools, libraries, and consortia to request universal service support for broadband connectivity services to and within schools and libraries. Over the years, the Commission has received many requests from E-Rate stakeholders asking that Wi-Fi on school buses be made eligible for E-Rate funding to enhance broadband access to students. Using the funding for this purpose is consistent with the Commission’s past determinations regarding other eligible off-campus uses of E-Rate-supported services. The draft Declaratory Ruling directs the FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau to include funding Wi-Fi on buses in establishing E-Rate eligible services for the upcoming funding year.

Funding for Wi-Fi on school buses is already covered under the Emergency Connectivity Fund program, a temporary program that Congress mandated as part of COVID-19 relief measures. To date, the Commission has committed more than \$35 million in funding through that program for the purchase of Wi-Fi hotspots and broadband services for school buses. The Declaratory Ruling finds that any potential impact of funding Wi-Fi on school buses would be limited compared to the substantial benefit reaped by students, noting that demand in the E-Rate program has been substantially lower than the funding cap in the last several years.

For more information on the E-Rate program, visit <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/>.

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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).