



**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of

Using E-Rate Funds to Support Remote
Learning

WC Docket No. 21-31

**COMMENTS REGARDING THE USE OF E-RATE FUNDS TO SUPPORT REMOTE LEARNING
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

NewDEAL CEO Debbie Cox Bultan



Thank you for the opportunity to comment on WC Docket No. 21-31, regarding the use of E-Rate funds to support remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am writing to express the NewDEAL's support for the FCC making E-Rate funds available for high-speed home internet access and connected devices for students.

[The NewDEAL](#) is a selective network of 160 state and local elected officials from 48 states, chosen based on their innovative, results-driven, and forward-thinking approach to governance. We have heard repeatedly from our members about the serious challenges caused by the digital divide in urban, suburban, and rural communities during the pandemic, and about their significant concerns regarding the impact of the increased reliance on virtual learning on students who do not have sufficient internet access. NewDEAL Leaders recognize that even in times of "normal" full-time, in-person schooling, students without high-speed internet suffer from a huge disadvantage, and this disadvantage is disproportionately felt among historically marginalized groups. These students are now affected not only by their inability to participate in school fully or, in some cases, at all, but also by their families' lack of access to telehealth appointments and job opportunities.

Our members have recently partnered with the Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed) to make state and local policy recommendations to advance the college and career readiness of all students. The [report we published in December](#) addresses ways to adapt to COVID-19 realities and challenges, and calls for a student right to broadband access, devices, and technical support. State and local leaders will have a much greater chance of making that right a reality if the FCC takes the proposed action to revise the E-Rate program.

In addition, NewDEAL concurs with comments and recommendations on the proposed FCC action made by All4Ed, which, along with a group of allied civil rights organizations, is also calling for the FCC to permit E-Rate to support remote learning during the pandemic. Resources from All4Ed on addressing the Homework Gap can be found [at this link](#).

Thank you for your consideration of this urgently needed improvement to the E-Rate program. NewDEAL and its members are prepared to support the approval and implementation of this change and we are excited to work with you on this and other work to expand high-speed internet access across the country. Please reach out any time we can be of service and we look forward to continuing to work with you to advance this crucial mission.