



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Urban Library Patrons and Communities to Benefit from E-rate Modernization**

*FCC Hits the Right Note for Urban Libraries and Their Communities*

**December 11, 2014 (Washington, D.C.)** - The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) applauds the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in their continued modernization of the E-rate fund to support the education technology needs of America. At today's FCC meeting, the Commission voted to raise the overall cap of the program by \$1.5 billion recognizing that our nation's public libraries and schools must have additional funding to keep up with the growing need for increased Internet connectivity.

Further, the FCC addressed the importance of providing adequate Wi-Fi services to the country's residents who reside in urban and suburban communities and rely on the public library as their only source of Internet connectivity. By providing increased funding for Wi-Fi service to the library systems that serve the greatest share of the U.S. population, the FCC recognizes the critical need for connectivity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the library's role in meeting this need.

ULC research demonstrated that libraries with the highest number of users require a higher level of E-rate support. "By using a formula that takes into consideration usage levels and population size, all public libraries and their patrons will benefit more fairly from the program," said Susan Benton, Urban Libraries Council President and CEO. "Our analysis confirms that library systems in large and mid-sized cities and those in suburban settings near urban areas have the highest Wi-Fi usage rates and therefore need increased funding. We are very grateful that the Commission recognizes this."

In the 18 years since the E-rate program was created, public libraries have become the most important, and often only, free public Internet access point in our communities. Library patrons are increasingly bringing their own devices to do their homework, use online career resources, stay in touch with friends and family, and connect with e-government programs. All of these activities require robust Wi-Fi networks and the E-rate program will now ensure that libraries have the funds to provide this service.

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#### **About the Urban Libraries Council**

The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) is a membership association that includes leading public library systems in the U.S. and Canada who are shaping the future of library service to people and communities. While ULC's members primarily represent urban and suburban communities, lessons from their work are used by library leaders everywhere who are committed to the continuous evolution and strengthening of libraries to meet changing community needs.

ULC strategically addresses issues important to all communities including education, workforce and economic development, public safety, environmental sustainability, health and wellness. [www.urbanlibraries.org](http://www.urbanlibraries.org).