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Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 9:42 AM
To: Technology; NCDPI Digital Teaching and Learning - Charter Group
Subject: E-rate for Emergency Educational Connections and Devices

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Reference: ARP Title VII, Subtitle D, Section 7402 Funding for E-rate support for emergency educational connections and devices. [H. R. 1319 \(Enrolled-Bill\) \(congress.gov\)](#)

The Good: Funding for student home internet access, wireless hotspots (including the service), and tablets/laptops/Chromebooks.

The Bad: Uncertainty about eligibility requirements, discount versus grant, and prioritization of funding.

The Ugly: This will remove the financial barrier limiting student remote access, but it does very little to improve the rural broadband access problem. This will create another very small filing window for applicants.

The FCC just issued [DA-21-317A1.pdf \(fcc.gov\)](#) seeking comments on the ARP Act and the FCC's proposed approach. The deadline for comments is [April 5](#), then replies to those comments are [due April 23](#). **By [May 10](#), the FCC will issue its Notice of Rules that gives the final details.** Anything before that date will be conjecture.

What we THINK will happen:

- While the Act states, “the Commission shall reimburse 100 percent of the costs...” it also says, “except that any reimbursement of a school or library for the costs associated with any eligible equipment may not exceed an amount that the Commission determines.” Demand will strip available funding, so the FCC will likely provide the funds in the same manner as networking infrastructure in E-rate: Schools will get up to 90% of the cost for the eligible goods/services, based on their urban/rural status and NSLP participation (School Lunch). The average discount rate per school in NC is 70%.

What MIGHT happen:

- The FCC will establish a maximum budget per student per PSU. For the current Category 2 E-rate program, the budget is \$167 per student over five years. We have no idea what the budget amount would be for ARP.

What we are discussing at DPI:

- If ARP E-rate becomes a discount program (as opposed to a 100% grant), will the state pay the non-discount share (average of 30%)? We are trying to calculate what that 30% would be as a dollar figure, but there are too many unknowns.

Critical Unknown Factor:

- In [DA-21-317A1.pdf \(fcc.gov\)](#) on page 15 “Other Federal and State Funding for Remote Learning”, the FCC states:

“...we propose limiting reimbursements out of the Emergency Connectivity Fund to those made for eligible equipment and services for which schools and libraries have not received funding through other federal programs (i.e., Emergency

Broadband Benefit Program, the CARES Act, or other provisions of the American Rescue Plan); state programs specifically targeted at providing funding for eligible equipment and services; other external sources of funding; or gifts. We further propose that schools and libraries must certify that they have not received and will not seek funding for the funded equipment and/or services from other federal or targeted state programs when seeking funding or reimbursement through the Emergency Connectivity Fund.”

We are uncertain if any of the [SL 2020-4 \(HB 1043\) \(ncleg.gov\)](#) Section 3.3 (7) and (8) funds will make NC schools ineligible to participate in the Emergency Connectivity Fund. This is one area where we will offer feedback to the FCC. DPI and the Friday Institute (along with our other partners and organizations) are involved in the discussions.

As we learn more about this, we will certainly share it immediately.

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