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Voqal Submits Comments Encouraging the FCC to Preserve and Modernize EBS

Longmont, CO, August 9, 2018—Voqal filed comments yesterday in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s Transforming the 2.5 GHz Band Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Voqal, filing on behalf of its five nonprofit owners and Mobile Citizen, welcomes the long-awaited decision by the FCC to revisit the Educational Broadband Service (EBS) rules. This rulemaking is a unique opportunity for the FCC to address three key objectives: closing the homework gap and the digital divide, enabling faster rural broadband deployment and accelerating 5G buildout to more Americans.

While there are many positive elements of the rulemaking, Voqal is concerned that some proposed rules would be detrimental to education. In its comments to the FCC, Voqal proposes three key policy positions:

1. **Keep EBS educational.** EBS has provided students, schools, libraries and communities with greater broadband connectivity. EBS is truly making a difference in closing the digital divide and homework gap. The FCC should maintain current eligibility requirements for EBS licensees, not abandon EBS’s long history by commercializing the band.
2. **Update the educational use requirements.** EBS educational use requirements were developed in the broadcast TV era and are outdated. The FCC has an opportunity to extend benefits to more students, schools and communities by modernizing EBS rules for the broadband world.
3. **Allow schools and nonprofits to acquire new EBS licenses, especially in rural areas.** The FCC froze issuing new licenses in 1995. Schools and nonprofits have been waiting decades for an opportunity to acquire a license and put this spectrum to use for their communities. The FCC should end the freeze and use priority windows to license new spectrum to EBS-eligible entities.

“Successful public-private partnerships have been encouraged in this band for over 30 years, said Voqal Director of Telecommunications Strategy, Mark Colwell. “This model has enabled greater educational connectivity while also encouraging commercial network deployment. There is no reason for the FCC to abandon this successful program now.”

Voqal, which has been serving educators and the community for over 30 years, encourages the commission to modernize this critical public asset while preserving its educational nature.

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Voqal is a national collaboration of EBS (Educational Broadband Service) licensees that work to advance social equity by creating an educated and engaged public. Voqal makes grants and impact investments, expands internet access and digital equity, offers fellowships and advocates for EBS licensees. Our efforts focus on the education and enrichment of all, not just those who are well-off socially, economically and politically.

Mobile Citizen, a Voqal initiative, actively advances social equity through access by providing low-cost wireless 4G internet exclusively to nonprofit organizations, educational entities and social welfare agencies. Championed by a national collaboration of EBS (Educational Broadband Service) licensees, Mobile Citizen’s internet service is available nationwide. We believe that making the internet available at

an affordable price contributes to an engaged public and ultimately a more equitable democracy. For more information, call 877-216-9603 or visit www.mobilecitizen.org.