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Voqal Statement on Internet Innovation Alliance Event

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Earlier today the Internet Innovation Alliance held an event titled “Can Auctioning the 2.5 GHz EBS Spectrum Band Help Close the Homework Gap?”

The following statement is attributable to John Schwartz, president of Voqal:

“The homework gap is perhaps the worst side effect of the persistent digital divide in America. However, EBS is part of the solution, not the problem. Removing educational eligibility to conduct an incentive auction would unravel EBS and over time eliminate existing programs that are addressing the homework gap. Many EBS licensees, like the five Voqal nonprofits, work hard every day to combat both the homework gap and the digital divide.

“Voqal’s Mobile Citizen currently provides low or no-cost internet services to tens of thousands of end users who would otherwise not be able to get online. The solution to the homework gap is not to disrupt successful programs like Mobile Citizen, but rather for the FCC to finish licensing EBS spectrum to schools, nonprofits and community anchor institutions eager to provide broadband.”

The following statement is attributable to Mark Colwell, director of telecommunications strategy at Voqal:

“Commercial operators already have access to more than 625 MHz of spectrum below 3 GHz in rural areas. The economics of rural buildout – not a lack of spectrum – is what is preventing the commercial sector from serving rural America. By finishing licensing EBS to schools, nonprofits and anchor institutions, the FCC can give local communities the missing ingredient – spectrum – to pursue broadband projects that actually close the digital divide, whether it’s through public-private partnership with commercial providers or through self-deployments that have proven incredibly successful in the 2.5 GHz band.”

Voqal is a collaboration of EBS (Educational Broadband Service) licensees that work to advance social equity through innovation 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.