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Voqal Applauds SHLB and Rural Broadband Leaders for Highlighting the Importance of EBS

March 7, 2019 – The following statement regarding today’s Schools, Health & Library Broadband Coalition (SHLB) Capitol Hill lunch briefing titled Window of Opportunity: How EBS Spectrum Can Close the Digital Divide can be attributed to Voqal Director of Telecommunications Strategy Mark Colwell:

“Voqal applauds SHLB for hosting this timely event to educate Congress and the public on the value EBS is delivering today and the potential EBS can have if the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) would finish licensing EBS spectrum to the 50 million American lacking access, especially in rural areas.

The panel participants, including Mobile Beacon, Northern Michigan University, A Better Wireless Internet, the Nebraska Department of Education and Mural Net, all demonstrate how EBS is filling gaps left by commercial providers today – both in urban areas where broadband is not affordable for all and in the most remote rural areas where large broadband companies have chosen not to invest.

Voqal supports the FCC’s proposal to finish licensing EBS to using priority filing windows. Schools and nonprofits have been waiting over 23 years for access to this critical resource. Today’s event demonstrates there is a strong demand from local communities – including schools and nonprofits – to gain access to EBS spectrum to close the digital divide and the homework gap in their communities.

The FCC has granted a total of 6 EBS waivers since 1995 and each waiver has resulted in a successful deployment. If the FCC is serious about closing the digital divide, it should use these deployments as evidence to finish licensing EBS rather than simply auctioning off this valuable public resource to the highest bidder.

Those interested in learning more about EBS and how to let the FCC and Congress know that this valuable public resource should be preserved and expanded to reach more people can visit saveebs.org.”

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

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