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Voqal Joins Call for FCC to Delay Issuing a Decision in EBS Rulemaking

May 14, 2019 – Yesterday, Voqal joined a group of organizations that includes Mobile Beacon, North American Catholic Educational Programming Foundation (NACEPF), National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), Public Knowledge and Schools Health and Libraries and Broadband (SHLB) Coalition in filing a request that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) delay making a decision in the Educational Broadband Service (EBS) rulemaking until the Commission has a more adequate record on which to base its decision.

According to Voqal Director of Telecommunications Policy Mark Colwell,

“Voqal strongly supports delaying a decision on the EBS rulemaking until two major issues are addressed. First, the record is incomplete. A major economic study about EBS will be submitted soon. The FCC should, at the very least, pause until this new evidence is considered and addressed. For a Commission so interested in economic analysis that it created a new office to evaluate these topics, failure to give full consideration to this new research – the only of its kind in the docket – is not only appropriate, but also necessary to come to the right decision regarding the future of EBS.

Secondly, the FCC and Department of Justice should make a decision in the pending Sprint/T-Mobile merger before any changes to EBS are made. The two decisions are undoubtedly linked. Access to this critical mid-band spectrum is one of the central reasons for this merger. Sprint has noted it has lease agreements for roughly 70 percent of all EBS spectrum. Voqal and others have called for a divestiture of 2.5 GHz spectrum and believe this issue needs to be resolved before clear rules for the EBS band can be determined. Writing new EBS rules before the conclusion of the merger is not only inappropriate, but also risks the Commission making rules that are not consistent with the future wireless world.”

EBS has immense potential to address the digital divide by providing educational institutions all over the country the internet access they need. For this reason, Voqal believes the FCC should take the time needed to ensure the new rules reflect the best possible landscape for EBS.

About Voqal

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.