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FCC Order to Auction EBS Spectrum Will Delay 5G and be Harmful to Students, Schools and Rural Communities

June 19, 2019 – Today, Voqal vehemently opposes the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) draft Order regarding the 2.5 GHz EBS (Educational Broadband Service) band. The Order not only abandons the band’s educational legacy, but also will hinder the FCC’s stated priorities of quickly delivering 5G, expanding rural coverage and closing the digital divide.

The following statement can be attributed to Voqal director of telecommunications strategy, Mark Colwell.

“Today’s draft order claims an auction of unused EBS – a situation the FCC created by failing to issue licenses for nearly a quarter century – will expedite 5G deployment. The truth is it will take years to finish licensing the band, delaying 5G and rural deployment. The Trump administration has made it clear the U.S. needs to win the race to 5G, so it is unfathomable to us why the agency would choose to conduct an auction versus issue licenses via priority windows.

“Worse yet the draft order is downright harmful to students, schools and rural communities struggling to close the digital divide. Today’s order is a radical policy shift that denies schools an opportunity to access spectrum necessary to deploy broadband.”

“The saddest part about this order is that rural Americans who continue to wait for broadband service will have to wait longer. They are tired of the false promises of big, national providers who already have over 625 MHz of spectrum – including 76.5 MHz of this band – to finally deliver real, affordable broadband. These providers have made it abundantly clear they are not interested in serving rural America. Instead of spoon-feeding commercial carriers more spectrum, the FCC should listen to Congress and the Department of Education’s pleas to license EBS to rural educators.”

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.