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Voqal Opposes FCC Proposal to Impose Additional Overall Cap on the Universal Service Fund Budget

Longmont, CO, June 5, 2019 – Today, Voqal shared its opposition to the proposal from the Federal Communications Commission to impose an additional cap to the Universal Service Fund (USF) budget.

Mark Colwell, Voqal director of telecommunications strategy, made the following statement:

“Voqal strongly opposes the FCC’s proposal to arbitrarily impose an overall cap on the Universal Service Fund. A USF cap would constrain the Commission’s ability to achieve its statutory mandate of ensuring the rapid deployment of telecommunications services to all Americans. Lower income Americans, rural Americans, libraries, hospitals and students all rely on USF programs for the vital broadband access they need to compete in the global economy and participate in our democracy.

Just last week, the FCC released its latest broadband report showing that over 21.3 million Americans still lack access to fixed broadband. Even when broadband is available, 4 out of 10 Americans are not subscribers likely because service is unaffordable. The USF programs were mandated by Congress precisely to make certain these Americans could access telecommunications services. Placing an arbitrary limit on the USF will not help make affordable broadband access available.

Instead, we encourage the FCC to focus on creative solutions to the digital divide. Whether that’s creating fixes that would help individual USF programs to be more effective, for example extending E-rate beyond the campus so more students can connect at home, or making additional spectrum available to educational institutions and Tribal Nations through the allocation of additional EBS licenses, there is plenty the FCC can do to help expediate broadband internet deployment and meet its universal service mandate.”

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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.