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NACEPF, Mobile Beacon, and Public Interest Groups Call on FCC to Delay EBS Rulemaking

Johnston, RI (May 14, 2019) - The North American Catholic Educational Programming Foundation, Inc. (NACEPF) and Mobile Beacon joined several public interest groups in [filing a letter](#) to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) asking that a decision in the [Educational Broadband Service \(EBS\) rulemaking proceeding](#) be postponed to give the public more time to provide input on key topics in the EBS rulemaking docket, and until a decision on the pending T-Mobile and Sprint merger is decided. Other organizations joining the letter include the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, Public Knowledge, and Voqal.

The organizations state there is currently an incomplete record due to several factors, including a 23-year freeze on making this spectrum available that effectively removed EBS from broad public awareness and FCC mapping issues that make it difficult for the public to determine what, if any, EBS white space is available in their county or district. These factors significantly hinder public comment and threaten to undermine the proceeding.

In the EBS rulemaking proceeding, the central decision before the FCC is whether to give rural educators the same opportunity to obtain licensed spectrum that their urban peers had decades ago, or to immediately sell this spectrum to commercial entities at auction. An economic analysis that compares the economic and social benefits of these two approaches will be available in a matter of days. The FCC should consider this data and seek comment on it before moving forward with a decision.

“Rural Americans on the wrong side of the digital divide cannot afford for our policymakers to continue with a ‘one size fits all’ approach to spectrum allocation,” said Katherine Messier, Executive Director of Mobile Beacon. “The commercial sector does not lack spectrum in the very same unserved areas where EBS white space is available. Giving the only remaining portion of the only spectrum reserved for educational purposes to those same entities is not going to close the gap.”

“If the FCC charges forward without a complete record in this proceeding, the only opportunity for organizations that care about serving families in unprofitable places to obtain licensed spectrum will be forever lost,” Messier stated. “Commercial interests must not always trump the public interest.”

The parties note that a decision on the pending merger between T-Mobile and Sprint will have significant implications on the EBS rulemaking proceeding. For example, the transaction has material implications on the functioning and outcome of any EBS auction. Last month, NACEPF and Mobile Beacon [filed a letter](#) with the FCC detailing the implications of the merger on the EBS rulemaking docket. Similar

concerns were also [raised this week](#) by national digital inclusion nonprofit, PCs for People, outlining the increased risks the merger poses to existing EBS programs that 128,000 low-income individuals rely on for connectivity today.

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About NACEPF: North American Catholic Educational Programming Foundation, Inc. (NACEPF) is a Rhode Island-based 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization and the second largest Educational Broadband Service (EBS) licensee in the United States. NACEPF's broadband service, religious and educational programming, and advocacy efforts support education at every level. NACEPF's worldwide philanthropic efforts focus on providing access to the resources essential to human development and well-being. This includes access to healthy food, clean water, safe housing, education, healthcare, and faith-based services. NACEPF's wholly-owned subsidiary, Mobile Beacon, broadband service to educational, nonprofit, and community anchor institutions throughout the United States. To learn more, visit www.nacepf.net.

About Mobile Beacon: Mobile Beacon provides high-speed, low-cost, mobile internet access to the anchors of communities: the nonprofits, schools, libraries, and healthcare organizations that provide vital services to millions of Americans every day. Through this broadband service, organizations have an essential tool to fulfill their missions and maximize their philanthropic impact, which allows organizations to access more information, reach more people, and help more in their communities. Learn more at www.mobilebeacon.org.