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NACEPF, Mobile Beacon Respond to FCC Chairman Pai's Plan for the 2.5 GHz Band

Johnston, RI (June 18, 2019) - "We are deeply concerned by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Chairman's blog regarding 2.5 GHz Educational Broadband Service (EBS) spectrum. Flying in the face of unanimous support on the record from Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, public interest groups, and educational associations to preserve the public interest benefits of this spectrum, the FCC is moving forward with a radical policy change that would eliminate the only remaining broadband spectrum reserved for educational use and the public interest.

We disagree with the Chairman's assessment in his blog that much of this public resource has been unused for decades. The only EBS spectrum unused today is that which the FCC has failed to license for more than two decades, depriving rural educators and families of access to a resource that has successfully connected tens of thousands of schools, libraries, and other anchor institutions, and through them, millions of students and families not served by commercial broadband offers.

The cruelest irony is that not only will the Commission fail in its goal to rapidly deploy this spectrum for 5G—a commercial auction will delay deployment by years instead of having it put to use in weeks or months if it was licensed—but it will take away one of the most effective tools available to combat the rural digital divide and the homework gap at a time when broadband for education has never been more critical.

The Chairman recently acknowledged the tremendous success of educational and tribal entities by granting permanent licenses to entities that demonstrated their ability to connect more rural Americans in the same areas that have neglected by the commercial sector—despite the abundance of spectrum below 3 GHz that they already hold. The FCC's new direction will not only permanently foreclose on any opportunity for entry and innovation by educators and rural operators who cannot compete in an auction, but it threatens EBS-led digital inclusion programs providing access to hundreds of thousands of low-income families."

- Katherine Messier, Executive Director, Mobile Beacon and Director of Development, NACEPF

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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.