

## NEWS RELEASE FROM AESA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOAN WADE

AESA is excited to announce that FCC Chairwoman, Rosenworcel announced today that the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) has begun a pilot program to allocate nearly \$200 million to bolster cybersecurity efforts in our nation's schools.

We applaud FCC Chairwoman Rosenworcel for her leadership in bringing this pilot to fruition. Similar to E-Rate, the potential school resources will be transformative, allowing rural, suburban, and urban districts to confront this growing threat to the safety, security, and privacy of the 50 million public school students.

Her call to action is the third phase of her broader Learn Without Limits initiative, an effort focused on ensuring that students everywhere have access to secure high-speed internet access. Chairwoman Rosenworcel's leadership is focused on expanding equitable access to connectivity for all Americans, and her passion for connectivity for the nation's schools and libraries via support for the E-Rate program has been tireless.

"AESA appreciates Chairwoman Rosenworcel's seemingly endless willingness to advocate for our nation's students, schools, and educational service agencies. Today she announced the third part of her Learn Without Limits Initiative, a three-year, \$200 million pilot within the Universal Service Fund to support cybersecurity services for eligible K 12 schools and libraries. I serve as the executive director of AESA and as a member of the Universal Service Administrative Company Board of Directors (the entity that oversees the Universal Service Fund, including E-Rate). Today's proposal is a focused, nuanced, and achievable call to action to support schools, libraries, and ESAs across the nation, via a coordinated effort between the Federal Communication Commission, U.S. Education Department, and U.S. Homeland Security Department's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, in their work to protect their broadband networks and data. Thank you, Chairwoman." Dr. Joan Wade, AESA Executive Director

Today's announcement is a common-sense proposal. Cybersecurity threats remain on the front burner of ESAs and the schools they serve nationwide. The frequency and costs continue to grow, and ESAs must proactively support their districts as they deal with cybersecurity threats and responses. AESA stands with AASA to support the proposed pilot program and how it will help the FCC better understand what role the Universal Service Fund could play in helping K-12 schools and libraries protect their E-Rate-funded broadband networks and data while improving schools' and libraries' ability to defend against cyber threats. We join AASA leaders in applauding the Chairwoman for her commitment to equity, connectivity, and our nation's schools, libraries, and students.

Finally, I'd like to thank the AESA and AASA advocacy teams for their collaborative efforts to bring this issue to the forefront of the FCC's concerns. Federal leaders must address cybersecurity as AI and other emerging technologies take hold globally. Today's announcement by the Chairwoman is a critical step forward in that work.



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