



Texas Association of School Boards

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Serving Texas Schools Since 1949

August 10, 2012

The Honorable John Carona
Chairman, Senate Committee on Business and Commerce
P. O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: Interim charge – “Analyze the state of the telecommunications market in Texas, including... the telecommunications service discounts.”

Dear Chairman Carona, members of the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce:

On behalf of the 1,030 school districts in Texas, the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) would like to submit comments to the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce on the referenced interim charge, specifically the telecommunications service discounts.

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) oversees the telecommunications discount program that was created in 1995 for libraries, public schools, institutions of higher education, and hospitals. This discount program specifies that telecommunications companies must provide certain broadband services at discounted rates. The statutory provisions governing some of these discounts are set to expire on January 1, 2016.

The discount program remains an essential component of the state’s information and telecommunications infrastructure. Without the discount program, many institutions would be unable to meet their current level of service. Public schools need for Internet service has grown over the past several years, and it is necessary to allow students to get the best education that they can have to remain competitive on a global level. School districts cannot afford an increase of telecommunications service operation at the same time that their budgets are being reduced. Therefore, the discount program provides a tremendous savings to school districts, close to two-thirds off of the market cost of a voice/internet line.

As stewards of hard working, tax-paying citizens, we consider this program beneficial to school districts and essential for Texas students. Please note our support for the Telecom Discount Program.

We appreciate your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Rubén D. Longoria, Jr.
Assistant Director for Governmental Relations
Texas Association of School Boards