

Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition Announced

New Coalition to Promote the Deployment of High-Capacity Broadband to Anchor Institutions and the Community.

Washington, D.C. (June 11, 2009) – Representatives of schools, libraries, health care providers and others today announced the launch of a new coalition to promote the deployment of high-capacity broadband facilities to these anchor institutions. The Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) Coalition was formed to highlight the urgent need these organizations have for high-capacity and affordable broadband connections for the 21st Century. The Coalition seeks to improve the broadband capabilities of schools, libraries and health care providers so that they can enhance the quality and availability of the essential services they provide to the public and serve underserved and unserved populations more effectively.

“The Internet has become a fundamental cornerstone of modern education, learning, health care delivery, economic growth, social interaction, job training, government services, and the dissemination of information and free speech,” said John Windhausen, Jr., Coordinator of the Coalition. “High-capacity broadband is the key infrastructure that K-12 schools, universities and colleges, libraries, hospitals, clinics and other health care providers need to provide 21st century education, information and health services. The Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that each and every school, library and health care provider has robust, affordable, high-capacity, broadband connections.”

The Members of the Coalition include the American Association of Community Colleges, American Hospital Association, American Library Association, Benton Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Center for Media Justice, Center for Rural Strategies, Consortium for School Networking, Consumer’s Union, Council of Chief State School Officers, EDUCAUSE, Free Press, International Society for Technology in Education, Internet2, Main Street Project, Media Access Project, Media and Democracy Coalition, Media Mobilizing Project, Microsoft, National Alliance for Media, Arts and Culture, National Hispanic Media Coalition, National Rural Health Association, New America Foundation, Public Knowledge, Sunesys, Texas Media Empowerment Project, United Church of Christ, AND U.S. PIRG.

The Coalition believes that connecting these anchor institutions with high-capacity broadband will generally provide the greatest benefits to those people who need it most – rural, low-income, disabled, elderly, societally and economically disadvantaged, and other unserved and underserved segments of the population.

Michael Calabrese, Director of the Wireless Futures Program at the New America Foundation, said, “Extending high-capacity Internet connections to every school, library and health care institution benefits every local community twice over: first, by improving the quality of education, library and health care services for local residents; and, second, by providing open interconnection points for other broadband providers in under-served communities. By becoming both technology hubs and bringing

fiber deep into every community, schools, libraries and health care providers will boost affordable broadband access for everyone. We urge the Obama administration to make fiber to community anchor institutions the top priority of \$7.2 billion in broadband stimulus spending that is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act."

Hilary Goldmann, Director of Government Affairs at the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), on behalf of the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and ISTE, said, "High-speed broadband networks in schools allow students to receive essential learning services across the country, including in some of the most remote areas of the United States. High-speed broadband also provides students with specialized courses, distance learning opportunities, and access to applications that can address students' learning needs. As the world becomes more interconnected, the availability of high-capacity broadband to our nations' schools will become an even more important resource in preparing our children for the 21st century. Accordingly, ISTE and CoSN believe that the SHLB Coalition's plan to provide high-speed in every school will not only create new opportunities for America, but also equip our students with the necessary skills for the jobs of tomorrow."

Beth McConnell, Executive Director of the Media and Democracy Coalition said, "We're pleased to join the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition in calling for wiring these anchor institutions with high-capacity broadband as soon as possible. We are especially pleased that the SHLB Coalition is calling for interconnection of school, library and hospital networks to other critical community entities. This interconnection principle is critically important to reaching more consumers where they live, work and connect with others. Non-profit groups, religious institutions, neighborhood development corporations, and social service centers could all benefit from bringing high-capacity broadband pipes into every community in the U.S."

Brian Quigley, Vice President of Strategy and Planning at Sunesys, said, "We have been providing fast and affordable broadband connectivity for schools, libraries and hospitals in many states over the past ten years. The results have been enhanced learning, improved patient care and greater broadband access to the public. We are very much looking forward to helping ensure that all schools, libraries and healthcare providers, including those in low-income areas, have the same capabilities."

Gary Bachula, Internet2 Vice President for External Relations said, "Innovation is fundamental to both educational and economic development, but innovation cannot happen in a vacuum. Internet2 believes that extending new technologies and rich educational content to pivotal community anchor institutions is the first major step toward realizing the goal of universal broadband coverage and to extending tremendous economic opportunity throughout the country. The Internet2 community has seen first-hand the amazing power that enhanced broadband can have in unleashing the imaginations of the students and faculty we serve today. We look forward to working with this coalition to help put these advanced capabilities into the hands of the broader public."

The Benton Foundation said, “As a founding member of the Schools Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition, Benton agrees with the Coalition’s moral justification that connecting these institutions with high-capacity broadband will provide the greatest benefits to those people who need it most: unserved and underserved segments of the population in rural and poor areas. This supports our ‘An Action Plan for America’ which states that our course for the future must contain ways of bringing broadband to ‘populations that are too often on the wrong side of the digital divide.’ The Coalition represents the first broadly supported, public and privately funded, reasonable step in getting fiber to the home using hub and spokes design in a community.”

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