



Who is SHLB?

SHLB advocates for policies and programs that empower anchor institutions to access and promote open, secure, high-quality broadband services, fostering connectivity and opportunity for all.

<https://www.shlb.org/>

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What is the USF?

The Universal Service Fund (USF) aims to ensure that all citizens, regardless of location, have access to affordable telecommunications and broadband services. Created in the 1996 Telecom Act, the USF helps to subsidize communications costs for schools, libraries, healthcare providers, low-income residents, and those in rural and high-cost areas. Four programs in total, the USF includes two programs relied on by anchor institutions across the country:

- **E-Rate:** Provides funding for internet access for eligible schools (including public, private nonprofit, and charter) as well as libraries. The amount of the subsidy is based on the poverty level of the student population and the urban or rural status of the institution's location.
- **Rural Health Care:** Allows rural health care providers to pay rates for telecommunications services similar to those of their urban counterparts.

Threats

In Courts

The Supreme Court recently heard oral arguments in [Consumers' Research v. FCC](#), a case challenging the constitutionality of the USF. SHLB is a named party arguing in support of the USF, and we are optimistic the majority of Justices will agree. A decision is expected in early summer.

In Congress

Funding for the USF should be **predictable, sustainable, and long-term**. The USF should be supported by a dedicated funding stream. Proposals that subject the USF to Congressional appropriations threaten the reliability of the fund.

Our Ask

USF support must be preserved. Without subsidies for internet connectivity, our nation's schools, libraries, and healthcare facilities would face significant challenges, impairing their ability to serve students, library patrons, and the broader community. Millions of people rely on these institutions for education, information, health care, and essential services.

Congress and the FCC should strengthen and improve the current contribution system with a modernized approach that broadens the base of funding and provides lasting support for these essential programs.

Funding the USF through appropriations is risky for schools, libraries, and health care providers. Anchor institutions rely on predictable budgets to fund IT infrastructure each year.

That's why we traveled to DC to ask Members of Congress to support the long-term future and health of the E-Rate and Rural Health Care programs!