

**To:** Members of the Ohio House Education and Career Readiness Committee

**From:** Keith Oelrich, Chief Executive Officer, Learning.com

**Date:** June 19, 2018

**Re:** Substitute Senate Bill 216 – Internet Safety Training Amendment

---

Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for considering my written testimony on behalf of an amendment being considered for Substitute Senate Bill 216.

Founded in 1999, Learning.com helps students, teachers, and schools excel in a digital world by providing K-12 students solutions to support districts as they transition to digital content and build students' digital literacy skills. Learning.com has spent the past 17 years partnering with educators to help ensure that students can use technology safely and effectively. We currently work with 1 out of every 6 school districts in the United States and serve 5.6 million students across the nation.

#### **OHIO PARTNERSHIP**

Through a partnership with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Learning.com was in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of providing districts and students in the state of Ohio with access to online safety curriculum, which ensures that students are instructed on how to be safe online, while enabling the Ohio Department of Education to fulfill federal E-rate funding compliance requirements associated with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

With an investment of \$350,000 per year, 256 Ohio districts serving approximately 400,000 students were utilizing Learning.com's online safety curriculum. **This statewide investment has assisted in the overall compliance requirements of the federal E-rate program, which provides \$70-90M annually to our state school districts and libraries.**

These districts have invested heavily in integrating this resource into classroom instruction, as well as the training and support of our teachers to ensure they are effective in its use. Through the use of this resource and its powerful reporting capabilities, Ohio's teachers are able to not only teach, but also measure individual student comprehension of these critical online safety skills.

In fact, over the four-year partnership with ODE, **the curriculum saw significant usage growth year over year.** In 2014-2015, there were 191 active Ohio school districts with 330,000 enrolled students and the curriculum was launched over 650,000 times. In 2015-2016, there were 250 active districts (a 31% change) covering 380,000+ enrolled students and over 1 million curriculum launches. It is clear that growth continued as the small statewide investment was made and would have likely continued to grow after passage of the state's most recent budget, HB 49.

#### **OHIO BUDGET PROCESS**

During the state's last biennial budget process, the Ohio House and Senate worked to include language that would further protect the intended use of the statewide investment for CIPA compliance. The revised language was included during the House budget process in Section 265.140 EDU GRF 200465 – Education Technology Resources and ultimately signed by Governor Kasich.

### **INSUFFICIENT ALTERNATIVES**

While free online alternatives do exist, these alternatives are not comprehensive in its instruction nor does it provide all of the required reporting capabilities on an individual student proficiency level to adequately meet compliance requirements under the federal E-rate policy. Utilizing a free alternative, as the Ohio Department of Education has instructed, requires teachers, school administrators, and/or districts to collect all the student data necessary following the training program to sufficiently comply with the law.

Following the enactment of Ohio's budget, ODE chose not to pursue the internet safety contract with Learning.com.

However, from our viewpoint, it was clear that the language change to the internet safety line item during the legislative process showed intent to implement a comprehensive online safety program in Ohio schools and libraries, while further protecting the funding for E-rate compliance reporting purposes.

### **FCC/USAC AUDITING**

The Federal government has the ability to audit this program, and it is imperative that our school districts have the resources necessary to adequately and efficiently comply with the E-Rate program requirements outlined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Universal Service Administrative Co., in partnership with the FCC, has an entire audit process at the ready for potential non-compliance findings.

- USAC (Universal Service Administrative Co.) has the ability, prescribed by the Federal Communications Commission, to institute a recovery of E-Rate program funds given to school districts throughout the country if compliance violations do occur. The state of Ohio was protecting this federal funding by offering the statewide Internet safety program through a small investment to all school districts throughout the state.
- According to the USAC website, common audit findings under the E-rate Program do include "insufficient internet safety policy."

**The \$350,000 budget investment is 0.5% of the overall estimated conservative return in federal dollars** with the added security and assurance that an audible record of all data compliance metrics will be readily available if the need should arise.

### **AMENDMENT FOR CONSIDERATION**

The amendment before you would require this statewide Internet safety investment to occur in order to ensure compliance with federal E-rate program policies.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important educational matter before the House Education and Career Readiness Committee. Attached, I have included a document identifying the process behind the Ohio success story. Please feel free to contact with any questions that may arise.