

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 13, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) continues its efforts to make high quality broadband available in rural areas, we write to request further steps be taken to promote the deployment of sustainable networks that are capable of meeting consumer demands now and into the future.

As the steward of Universal Service Fund (USF) resources collected from American ratepayers, we encourage the FCC to make the most efficient and effective use of those funds as possible. Any large-scale infrastructure project requires reasonable planning that takes account not only of current needs, but also of projected demands over the life of the asset being funded; and the distribution of USF should be no different. For broadband specifically, this requires that networks, built using USF, must be capable of delivering speeds, latency, and usage capacity according to what the FCC deems necessary to meet the needs of consumers, in urban and rural areas, over the next decade. If our rural communities are to survive and flourish, our rural constituents need access to services that are reasonably comparable with those in urban areas. By contrast, it would be an inefficient use of resources to promote services that cannot keep pace with consumer demand and the evolution of broadband in urban areas. As the FCC moves forward to adopt new rules in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund proceeding, we urge you to promote the deployment of networks that will be sustainable as new technology advancements are made and that are able to deliver the best level of broadband access for the available USF budget for many years to come.

Similarly, we believe it is important for the FCC to be a responsible steward of USF resources and ensure that those parties receiving such support can deliver on the commitments they make. This requires monitoring and reporting once USF support is received to guarantee it is being used as intended. The FCC should also make sure *before* the auction occurs that the participants in the auction can successfully deliver on their promises. If a party is incapable of delivering broadband as promised, the American ratepayer loses twice over – first for having contributed sums that did not go toward the deployment of broadband as hoped, and then again for those ratepayers who reside in the area that ended up not receiving the promised service. It is therefore critical that any use of an auction to distribute USF support include meaningful processes upfront to prequalify bidders. This should apply to all bidders, regardless of the technology they propose to use or the performance levels they promise to deliver.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you to help close the digital divide and provide rural American consumers with the same kinds of digital opportunities that many others take for granted.

Sincerely,



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



TIM WALBERG
Member of Congress



BILL FLORES
Member of Congress



JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress



GREG GIANFORTE
Member of Congress



XOCHITL TORRES SMALL
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CINDY AXNE
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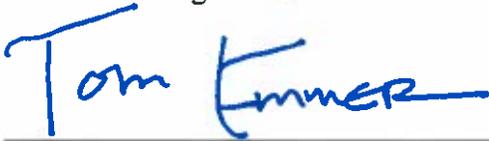
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