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**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives**

July 21, 2009

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BLUE DOG COALITION

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Re: *A National Broadband Plan for Our Future*, GN Docket No. 09-51

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to submit my comments about my concerns with the level of minority participation in the development and implementation of a national broadband plan. A sound and strategic plan is essential to ensuring an effective and accessible broadband service is available for all minority and low-income communities.

Access to broadband is especially important for Hispanic communities as it continues to grow in influence and purchasing power. There are now 2.5 million Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States, which generates up to 400 million in gross receipts. However, a slow adaptation of new technologies and moreover, a significant barriers to accessible broadband services continue to hold back and impeded further economic growth. In 2007, the Census reported that 35% of Latino households subscribed to broadband, compared to 69% of Asian households and 55% of White Non-Hispanic households. The ability for any community to share large amounts of data over long distances in mere seconds can exponentially increase the available opportunities for business, education, and civic engagement.

Therefore, I request that as a comprehensive and strategic plan is laid out, the following proposals be taken into consideration:

Creation of accessible and affordable broadband options:

The communities in greatest need are those that are low-income, minority and multi-cultural in rural, suburban and urban parts of America, all who across the board are facing the toughest consequences of the current economic recession. Providing an accessible and affordable broadband adoption to these communities will exponentially alleviate the digital divide and increase the economic growth of these communities. Furthermore, to ensure affordability of broadband options, the service options made available need to be tailored to meet the needs and

means of these communities; this includes adjusted initial customer and equipment deposits. Specific focus on low-income and minority communities is strongly encouraged given the historical low priority received by these communities for the deployment of new technologies.

Broadband availability and adoption educational campaigns

All broadband deployment and adoption policies need to include strategic uses of broadband availability and adoption educational campaigns for low-income, minority communities. These targeted communities must be informed of the availability of service options, the benefits of their use, and how to find practicable and accessible uses of these options. Such targeted efforts may include special emphasis on schools and health care centers; areas in a community that can greatly benefit from increased wise technology investment and adequate preparation to use these technologies by their employees.

Accurate Broadband mapping with correlated social indicators

To ensure proper progress measurements and to identify areas of greatest need, a multi functional mapping of all broadband accessibility and adoption is needed. In addition to the technical indicators of broadband availability, speed of connection, competitive pricing, etc, such mappings may include indicators of poverty, income, ethnicity, housing, healthcare providers, schools, churches, local government, etc.. Such measures will assist in identifying areas of immediate need and in the monitoring of emerging technologies.

Market entrance opportunities for Minority-owned business

Minority-owned businesses rising economic presence in the United States, and coupled with the rise in the minority population's purchasing power, are key elements in the successful broadband deployment. The entrance of these businesses will increase competition and create more minority-held jobs. Current unemployment statistics for minorities are rising at historic levels, in allowing a participation increase of minority-owned businesses; we may lower these alarming statistics.

Only through a comprehensive broadband policy, with a focus on minority and low-income communities, can we successfully ensure access to broadband for everyone.

Respectfully Submitted,



JOE BACA
Member of Congress