

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2012

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

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

In March 2011, we wrote to you concerning the current need for affordable high capacity broadband services in the seven counties that comprise the Brazos Valley in Central Texas. Since that time, health care providers in our rural communities remain without access to adequate and affordable high-capacity services necessary to deliver cost effective, quality health care to the rural and low-income residents of the area. A lack of competitive pricing and a shortage of high-capacity services among local carriers leave our health care providers and their patients in this area without access to state-of-the-art diagnostic tools available at medical centers located in more urban centers of the state. Consequently, our residents often must drive long distances to these medical centers to acquire adequate health care, made increasingly unaffordable for them on account of rising gas prices.

For these reasons, it is critical to the Brazos Valley that the Commission adopt its proposed health infrastructure program as part of the reformed Rural Health Care Program by the end of this year. Two years have passed since the Commission first issued its Rural Health Care Program Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and this is more than sufficient time in our view to develop a final rule for the program. Given statements by the Universal Service Administrative Company, it will need 12 months to implement a reformed Rural Health Care Program, and we are concerned that the Commission's failure to issue a final rule by the end of the year could push the effective date of the program to 2014.

We continue to believe that a properly designed and administered health infrastructure program offers the most cost effective and timely way of bring the benefits of telemedicine and remote patient care to communities in the Brazos Valley. Beyond the immediate health care needs of our rural and low-income residents, a reformed Rural Health Care Program is vital to meeting national goals for increasing access and reducing the cost of health care through Health Information Technology. Indeed, proposed Health and Human Services regulations concerning the meaningful use of electronic health records recognize that such goals cannot be met in areas of the country without adequate broadband access.

We therefore urge the Commission to finalize its rule for the reformed Rural Health Care Program by the end of this year, and include the Health Infrastructure Program originally proposed in the Notice of Proposed Rule Making.

Sincerely,



Bill Flores
Member of Congress



John Carter
Member of Congress



Joe Barton
Member of Congress



Michael McCaul
Member of Congress