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PENNSYLVANIA

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
JOINT ECONOMIC

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 13, 2014

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I am writing in regard to the recent tragedy that occurred along Interstate 81 near the border between Maryland and Pennsylvania. This event highlights the continued need to address concerns about coverage and reliability of the telecommunication system in rural areas.

Reports state that in the early morning hours of January 4, 2014, a driver called 911 on his cell phone while driving north on Interstate 81 near the Maryland and Pennsylvania border. While in Maryland the driver reported a truck was chasing him up the highway while shooting at him. Unfortunately, it was reported that the phone call was dropped as he crossed into Pennsylvania, forcing the individual to make a second call to 911 dispatchers. When the police arrived on the scene, they found the vehicle forced off the road and the young man shot several times. Tragically, the man later died from his injuries.

I respectfully ask that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) investigate this heartbreaking incident and study how we can improve mobile telecommunication services in rural areas. While I understand the FCC is aware of the concerns that rural communities face when dealing with dropped calls or poor quality services, I believe a renewed effort must be made to drastically improve these services. I also ask that your office take a particular look at how emergency services and responses are being affected by poor quality phone service.

Phone services are vital to rural communities and we must ensure we are striving to expand new and updated technologies to all Americans regardless of where they live. I appreciate your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator