

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 30, 2014

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

As former Governors of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and as its current United States Senators, we are committed to bringing affordable, quality broadband to businesses and citizens throughout the Commonwealth. We are encouraged by your recent decision to authorize targeted experiments that focus on bringing broadband service to rural America. In particular, we write to express our support for the 39 expressions of interest submitted by Virginia entities.

Telecommunications services are critical for economic growth, innovation, and U.S. competitiveness. Access to telecommunications services is no longer a luxury but has become a key element of economic infrastructure for Americans. While the number of new broadband subscribers continues to grow, studies and data show that the rate of broadband deployment in urban and high-income areas is outpacing deployment in rural and low-income areas. Nationally, 98 percent of the non-rural population has access to broadband at a benchmark speed of 4 Mbps/1 Mbps. However, in rural areas, only 76 percent of the population has access. This trend is even more pronounced in Virginia, where less than 63 percent of the rural population has access. This divide is unacceptable.

The rural broadband trials proposed by the FCC present an unprecedented opportunity for the Commission to explore how best to accomplish its goal of achieving universal service. As illustrated by the almost 1,000 expressions of interest received by the FCC, there is an overwhelming demand from a diverse set of entities for federal funding to build out broadband networks in the most unserved areas of our nation.

We fully support the expressions of interest submitted by Virginia entities. We ask that as this process moves forward, the applications from the Commonwealth be carefully and favorably considered by the FCC, especially in light of the reality that rural areas in Virginia have lower average levels of service than similar areas nationwide. Finally, we recognize the

significant work that the Commission has done already towards ensuring that all Americans have access to modern communications networks and hope that the proposed trials will enhance these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark R. Warner". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Kaine". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Tim Kaine
United States Senator