



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

July 18, 2014

The Honorable John Thune
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Thune:

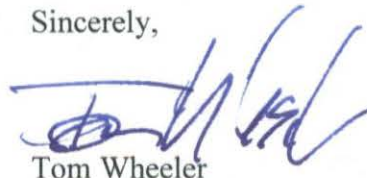
Thank you for your letter regarding the status of the Rural Health Care Skilled Nursing Facilities Pilot Program (SNF Pilot). I understand and appreciate your interest in the SNF Pilot and the role of skilled nursing facilities in delivering health care to our country. Your views are very important and will be considered as we continue to evaluate implementation of the SNF Pilot.

In 2012, the Commission released a *Report and Order* that created the Healthcare Connect Fund to reform, expand, and modernize the Rural Health Care Program. The Healthcare Connect Fund provides support for high-capacity broadband connectivity to eligible health care providers and encourages the formation of state and regional broadband health care provider networks. In adopting the Healthcare Connect Fund, the Commission also established a three-year, \$50 million SNF Pilot to test how to support broadband connections for skilled nursing facilities.

As you note in your letter, implementation of the SNF Pilot was deferred pending the Commission's consideration of health care related proposals outlined in the *Technology Transitions Order*. However, skilled nursing facilities, like those operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society, can still participate in the Healthcare Connect Fund by joining health care provider networks and taking advantage of the economies of scale that are driven by bulk buying and competitive bidding. The Commission has been working with the skilled nursing facility community to educate them about how they can utilize the Healthcare Connect Fund, and I welcome further dialogue with you and other stakeholders about how we can ensure they are aware of this opportunity.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler