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September 11, 2014

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

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Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I am writing to encourage the Federal Communications Commission to implement Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II) with a flexible approach that enables broadband providers to reach its new goal of 10 Mbps service within the program's current annual budgets.

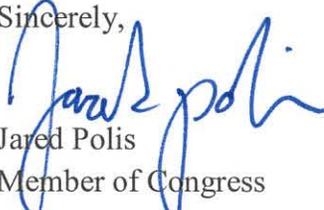
The Second District of Colorado is home to two top research universities and a thriving start-up culture that draws many of the nation's best minds, but my district also includes some of the most rural communities with challenging terrain and low population density that make them difficult to reach with high-speed broadband connections. If implemented successfully, I understand CAF II offers an opportunity to bring faster, fiber-fed broadband connections to over 57,000 unserved households in the rural Colorado communities, including over 4,400 households in small mountain communities in my district.

I am pleased that the Commission has raised its speed goal from 4 Mbps to 10 Mbps, but I also understand that this more ambitious goal does not come with increased funding. I am concerned that if the CAF II does not allow broadband providers a reasonable level of flexibility, the program's overall mission could be endangered, especially because it represents the final phase of Universal Service reform and will effectively determine whether many rural Coloradans will have a broadband connection or not for the foreseeable future.

The June 10 FNPRM identifies a number of constructive ideas that could help achieve the speedier network goals without exceeding the CAF II annual budget, such as extending the funding period, raising the "unserved" threshold, and permitting providers to shift support from census blocks with very few residents to the unserved portions of partially served census blocks. I would encourage the Commission to require a reasonable standard of verification for industry claims that an area is already served and therefore ineligible for support.

Thank you for considering my concerns, and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,


Jared Polis
Member of Congress