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For Immediate Release

CHAIRMAN PAI’S PROPOSAL TO INCREASE RURAL HEALTH CARE FUNDING RECEIVES MAJORITY SUPPORT AT FCC

WASHINGTON, June 14, 2018—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai announced that a majority of Commissioners have voted in favor of his proposal to increase funding for the Universal Service Fund’s Rural Health Care Program by \$171 million a year.

“Telemedicine is vital in many communities that may not otherwise have access to high-quality health care, and the Federal Communications Commission has an important role in promoting it. I want to thank Commissioners O’Rielly and Carr for their support as the FCC takes the critical step of updating its Rural Health Care Program. It will help rural health care providers deliver critical telemedicine services to Americans across the country,” said Chairman Pai. “I’m also pleased to see such strong bipartisan backing for my proposal in Congress and among the health care community.”

-- What They’re Saying About the Proposal --

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito: “Thank you for taking steps to expand the Rural Health Care Program, @AjitPaiFCC! I’ve heard from many WVians who rely on this important resource. Read more about a letter I sent to the chairman last month encouraging him to take this action: <https://bit.ly/2L1AYgM>.” (Tweet, 6/6/18)

Sens. Susan Collins & Angus King: “Rural healthcare providers across Maine rely on telemedicine to ensure their patients can receive critical care in a timely manner. . . . This long-overdue funding increase would be a boon to both healthcare providers and patients in rural communities across our country.” (Press Release, 6/7/18)

Sen. Joni Ernst: “Well done, @FCC. This program provides critical funding for #broadband and telecommunication services so folks in Iowa, and #rural communities around the U.S., can have better access to the health care services they need.” (Tweet, 6/6/18)

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp: “The FCC’s Rural Health Care Program has helped rural health providers expand telemedicine and deliver care to children, seniors, veterans, and others in hard-to-reach communities. It’s encouraging that the FCC listened to us, and this new proposal to increase federal funding is a needed step toward expanding high-speed internet in rural America, where we still face hurdles to connectivity.” (Williston Herald, 6/10/18)

Sen. John Hoeven: “Technology and telemedicine are increasingly critical in delivering

quality health care in rural areas. The FCC’s Rural Health Care Program provides important resources that enable patients in rural communities to access efficient, quality care. We appreciate the FCC’s proposal to increase funding and account for inflation, which will help to help ensure this program meets the needs of communities.” ([Williston Herald](#), 6/10/18)

Sen. Chris Van Hollen: “Whether you live in a large city or a small town, you shouldn’t have to worry about getting medical treatment when you need it. This funding will help ensure that no matter where Marylanders live, they have access to quality health care.” ([Press Release](#), 6/7/18)

Rep. Dave Loebsack: “I am pleased that the FCC voted to raise the amount of funding available through the Rural Health Care Program, which has not seen an increase since 1997. It is essential that all the different components of the USF are fully supported, and ensuring rural healthcare providers and their facilities have access to broadband internet is necessary for both patients and doctors. . . . [T]his increase will allow more providers in our rural communities to have access to broadband to better treat patients.” ([Press Release](#), 6/10/18)

Rep. Elise Stefanik: “Accessing healthcare in rural areas presents unique challenges that require innovative solutions. I’m pleased to see @AjitPaiFCC calling on the @FCC to expand its telemedicine-focused Rural Health Care Program.” ([Tweet](#), 6/6/18)

American Hospital Association, Executive Vice President Tom Nickels: “We greatly appreciate the action and commitment by Chairman Pai to meet the broadband connectivity needs of rural health care providers. This funding is critical to improve the lives of rural Americans now more than ever since innovations in health care demand connectivity for telehealth, remote monitoring, patient engagement and daily operations.” ([Press Release](#), 6/7/18)

Alaska Communications: “We are pleased Chairman Pai has proposed to increase the Rural Health Care Program budget, apply the increased cap to the current funding year and provide long-term certainty by adjusting the budget annually for inflation and allowing unused funds from prior years to be carried forward to future years. These are important steps forward for the Rural Health Care program, which is so critically important for our state. We look forward to working constructively with the FCC to ensure continued robust participation from Alaska.” ([The Cordova Times](#), 6/10/18)

Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition, Executive Director John Windhausen, Jr.: “The SHLB Coalition is extremely pleased with Chairman Pai’s intention to increase funding for the Rural Health Care program. This increase is long overdue, as the \$400 M cap on the RHC program has remained set in stone for over twenty years. This proposal also addresses our concerns about the retroactive funding reductions for FY 2017 by ensuring that applicants in the current funding year can be fully reimbursed. This action will avoid the unfortunate 15% to 25% reductions that had been announced for the current funding year.” ([Press Release](#), 6/10/18)

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constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).