



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

August 6, 2018

The Honorable Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senate  
111 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Ernst:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of high-speed broadband access to Americans in the most rural areas of the country, including those in Iowa. I wholeheartedly agree that closing the digital divide is our foremost mission as an agency, and I appreciate your recognition of the work the Commission completed earlier this year to foster further deployment in the most remote corners of our country.

In March, the Commission devoted over \$500 million to increasing deployment by small carriers in rural communities—a reversal of the prior Administration’s policy of punishing these carriers instead of rewarding them for providing high-speed, high-quality services. As part of that action, we also doubled down on our model-based support for hard-to-serve communities, increasing the funding for carriers willing to build out in an efficient manner. In April, we then moved forward by proposing to eliminate many of the legacy burdens for small, model-based carriers serving businesses in rural American—burdens that unnecessarily divert funding from build-out to paperwork. And in June, we eliminated a rule that penalized small rural carriers with extra Universal Service fees whenever they offered broadband.

Nonetheless, I agree with you that more must be done if we’re going to extend digital opportunity to all Americans. In March, the Commission issued a detailed Notice of Proposed Ruling that explores how to ensure sufficient and predictable support over the long term. In particular, we take a close look at expanding access to and funding for our small-carrier cost model and seek to end the unpredictable cuts to carriers not on the model. Increased funding will boost broadband deployment in Iowa and all of rural America, and the additional reforms will put our high-cost system on a more efficient path so that every Iowan and every American can benefit from the digital revolution. Commission staff is carefully reviewing the record in the proceeding, and I aim to circulate an order ensuring adequate and efficient funding for rural broadband deployment later this year.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent.

Ajit V. Pai