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May 8, 2018

Received & Inspected

MAY 21 2018

FCC Mailroom

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

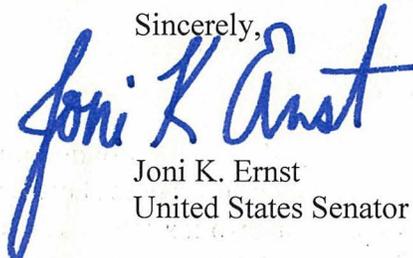
In March 2018, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted an order that provided an infusion of new funding for the high-cost program within the Universal Service Fund (USF). As you know, the USF's high-cost program is extremely important to rural America, as it helps bring affordable broadband service to parts of the country that are the most difficult and costly to serve. I thank you for these important efforts and your ongoing work to address the digital divide.

Iowa is one of our nation's most rural states and is home to more local telephone companies than any other state. These companies are fixtures in their towns and take great pride in the service they provide to their communities. Despite progress in recent years, it remains challenging for small providers to build out broadband to rural areas. The USF's high-cost program has played a key role in helping these companies build out broadband, and it's important that the high-cost program remains a reliable and effective tool for them.

Access to reliable broadband is a necessity in the modern economy. It provides farmers and small businesses with access to important market data and makes it easier for them to target new customers and grow their operations. It also provides our patients with better access to healthcare providers and our students with new learning opportunities.

With these concerns in mind, I ask that you continue working to ensure that the USF's high-cost program is able to meet the needs of rural America. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to continued dialogue with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

CC: Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Brendan Carr

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