

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6315

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April 15, 2019

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

The U.S. House Small Business Committee prides itself on partnering with other policymakers to foster a healthy economic environment for our nation's small businesses. We hear from them every day, and many of them convey their concerns about conditions that hurt their ability to compete and excel in the modern economy. Access to broadband is an important condition for small businesses to grow and expand their business. As we heard in a Small Business Committee hearing focused on boosting rural digital opportunities, small e-commerce businesses in rural America suffer from inconsistent coverage and must either resort to using their cellphone as a hotspot or cease distribution until they can connect. When small businesses cannot maintain operations in rural America, it impacts the viability of rural communities and their ability to attract young families and compete in the digital economy. We are writing today to share our concerns about the digital divide and offer several ideas we believe will help expand broadband connectivity.

Our interactions with small business owners and entrepreneurs in every corner of the country have confirmed that the lack of access to affordable high-speed broadband is a pervasive issue that is stifling innovation and hindering economic growth. We applaud the Commission's efforts to find ways to improve broadband mapping data and urge the Commission to move swiftly to achieve greater granularity and increased accuracy. If given the opportunity, small businesses and would-be entrepreneurs across the country would take advantage of broadband quality internet if it was available to them.

We encourage the Commission to take the necessary steps to improve its data collection methods. Accurate broadband maps will ensure that federal funds will serve the communities that need them most. As members of Congress, we look forward to working with FCC on those data collection methods that will provide more context and assist in defining a more complete picture of the state of broadband availability.

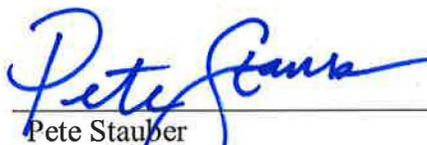
Furthermore, we have heard from small business owners who are enthusiastic about new and innovative technologies, such as TV white spaces technology (TVWS), that provide them with access where there is a deficit or lack of fiber-optic solutions. Adopting a mixed technology model that provides access to more unlicensed and shared spectrum opportunities for innovators to develop new technology helps close the digital divide. It is our understanding that the Commission has taken some steps in this area. However, there are still several regulatory barriers hindering the broader deployment of alternative broadband technology. It is also our hope that new technologies will not just increase access but also produce affordable options. We encourage the FCC to continue exploring ways to maximize access to unlicensed and shared spectrum in rural areas and reduce regulatory roadblocks to the availability of TVWS technology.

We appreciate your continued and tireless attention to the digital divide. The House Committee on Small Business is ready to work with the Commission to tackle the remaining roadblocks in the way of broadband deployment across the country. Please respond to our offices by May 15, 2019 with the FCC's plan to foster innovative ways to close the digital divide. Thank you again, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Jared Golden
Chairman
Contracting and Infrastructure
Subcommittee



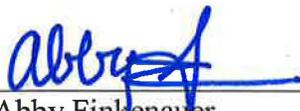
Pete Stauber
Ranking Member
Contracting and Infrastructure
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Committee on Small Business



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Troy Balderson
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Development
Subcommittee



Andy Kim
Chairman
Economic Growth, Tax and Capital
Access
Subcommittee



Tim Burchett
Member of Congress



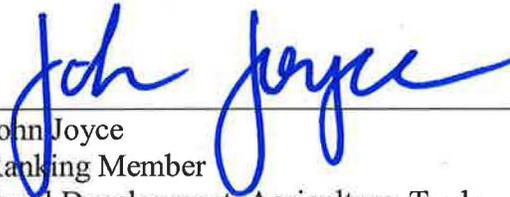
Jason Crow
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Subcommittee



Sharice Davids
Member of Congress



John Joyce
Ranking Member
Rural Development, Agriculture, Trade,
and Entrepreneurship
Subcommittee



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Michael O'Rielly, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Geoffrey Starks, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission