

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2019

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

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Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to you today regarding the ongoing efforts of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to identify the availability of fixed and mobile broadband service across the country.

Challenges currently exist to the precise representation of broadband assets on federal broadband maps. Data included on current maps is reported at the census block level. Therefore, if one household or location receives broadband coverage in a census block, the maps indicate that the entire census block is covered. An additional challenge is that broadband maps are populated with information reported by Internet Service Providers. The process for verifying these details is inconsistent, causing the potential for unvalidated information to be included on the maps. The possible inaccuracy of the data also could affect which areas demonstrate the need for more broadband build-out and their eligibility to receive FCC or USDA support.

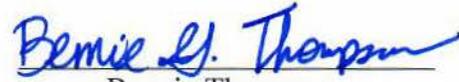
We believe that the FCC should address these considerations to help ensure federal broadband funds support projects that increase coverage in unserved areas. Data should be more granularly reported, and a robust challenge process is needed so that the FCC can accurately distribute funding for projects that improve coverage where it is needed. We also encourage the FCC to consider smaller Internet Service Providers when determining possible updates to reporting standards so that these operators do not experience burdensome new requirements that would inhibit their immediate participation.

In our home state of Mississippi, much work has been done to expand access to broadband in underserved areas. Telehealth and precision agriculture have helped drive the demand for broadband in areas that have not previously received coverage. Many rural areas of our state, however, still lack broadband availability. We ask for your assistance in continuing to increase access to these important services.

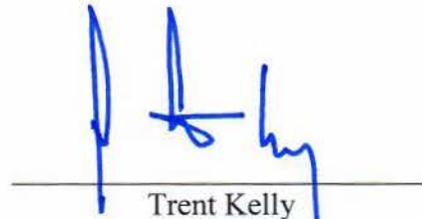
Thank you for your attention to this request. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,


Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator


Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress


Steven Palazzo
Member of Congress


Trent Kelly
Member of Congress


Michael Guest
Member of Congress