



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

August 20, 2019

The Honorable Joni Ernst
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Ernst:

Thank you for your letter regarding the joint petition filed by Northeast Iowa Telephone Company and Western Iowa Telephone Association regarding deployment obligations for home-based businesses for carriers receiving support in the Commission's Alternative Connect America Cost Model (A-CAM) program. As you know, closing the digital divide is my top priority and I am proud of the role that small, rural carriers play in accomplishing that goal.

I agree with you that it is imperative that we provide carriers with certainty and predictability so that they can continue deploying broadband to rural Americans. To that end, the Wireline Competition Bureau put out a public notice seeking comment on the joint petition on June 20, and the comment period recently closed on July 25. Commission staff are currently reviewing the record, and I expect they will provide their recommendation in the coming weeks.

That's also why the Bureau recently sought comment on how the Commission should adjust deployment obligations for carriers in the event that there are fewer actual locations in their service areas than the cost model predicted. It is critical to the success of the program that the Commission adopt a flexible approach that works with small, rural carriers to tailor their deployment obligations to the facts on the ground. At the same time, this approach will ensure that taxpayers that ultimately pay for the Universal Service Fund programs see the money going to deploying broadband where it is needed.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Your letter will be made part of the record of the proceeding. 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 written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Ajit V. Pai



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The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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