



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

August 22, 2019

The Honorable Cindy Axne  
U.S. House of Representatives  
330 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Axne:

Thank you for your letter regarding broadband in rural America. Closing the digital divide is my top priority. I have seen for myself in 45 states, including Iowa, and the territories of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands what affordable high-speed Internet access can do for a community—for its families, its schools, its hospitals, its farms, its businesses—as well as the impact of its absence.

I agree that using updated and accurate broadband deployment data is critical to bridging the digital divide. We need to understand where broadband is available and where it is not to target our efforts and direct funding to areas that are most in needed. That is why the Commission began a top-to-bottom review of the Form 477 process to ensure that broadband data was more accurate, granular, and ultimately useful to the Commission and the public.

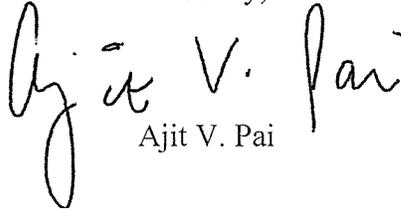
Along those lines, the Commission adopted a Report and Order on August 1 to create the Digital Opportunity Data Collection, an all-new approach to mapping that would yield more granular and more accurate broadband maps. That Report and Order also provides for regular updates of the filed data to ensure that the maps we rely on are current. That means requiring broadband providers to report where they actually offer service below the census block level, having the Universal Service Administrative Company independently test the validity of that data, and incorporating public feedback to ensure up to date and accurate broadband deployment maps.

These updated maps will be used to focus funding to expand broadband through future initiatives such as the second phase of the proposed Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund will complement and build on the success of the CAF Phase II auction of fixed broadband support, which allocated \$1.488 billion to expand broadband to more than 700,000 unserved rural homes and small businesses over the next 10 years. Once implemented, the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund would provide over \$20 billion over the next decade to connect millions of rural homes and businesses to high-speed broadband, representing the FCC's single biggest step yet to close the digital divide.

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I appreciate your interest in working with the FCC to close the digital divide and look forward to continuing to collaborate on this issue. 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" and a long tail on the "i".

Ajit V. Pai