

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 18, 2019

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

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Dear Chairman Pai,

We appreciate the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC's) decision to open a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) to revitalize Educational Broadband Service (EBS) licenses and make spectrum more readily available for wireless services. We strongly support your commitment to wireless network buildout and addressing the nation's broadband needs. This vitally important work should include making new EBS licenses available to educational entities that could put them to work as the Commission originally had envisioned.

Wireless is an integral component of Nebraska's broadband strategy, especially in our most rural communities. Approximately 64 percent of our 244 school districts have fewer than 500 students K-12. More than half of our school districts occupy a single building. Outside of Douglas County, most of these students' homes are in areas with fewer than five people per square mile. Connecting these students to broadband access they need for homework and other online learning opportunities has been a longstanding challenge. Nearly 20 percent of Nebraska students lack wired internet access at home or are underserved, with internet connections significantly below the FCC's 25Mbps/3Mbps benchmark.

Nebraska is particularly well positioned to leverage EBS licenses. The State Office of the Chief Information Officer and the University of Nebraska jointly manage *Network Nebraska*, a statewide network interconnecting schools and colleges that was created by the Nebraska Legislature in 2007. New EBS licenses could extend *Network Nebraska's* broadband backbone to connect more students to rich learning opportunities, including helping them acquire the skills they will need after graduation.

In promoting new EBS licensing opportunities for educational entities, we request that the Commission's updated EBS rules permit state-level agencies, such as the Nebraska Department of Education, to acquire EBS licenses for the purpose of implementing statewide solutions that reach rural students. As described in the joint comments filed by the Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska Educational Television, and the State of Nebraska Office of the Chief Information Officer, we encourage the Commission to consider allowing a state agency to qualify under the definition of "local presence" to enable consistent statewide planning and execution. State Education Agencies are by their nature local to every community and school district.

EBS can help Nebraska close persistent broadband gaps for students, especially in our most isolated rural communities. New EBS licenses will strengthen the state's existing broadband connectivity partnerships, like *Network Nebraska*. We appreciate your attention to this important matter. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

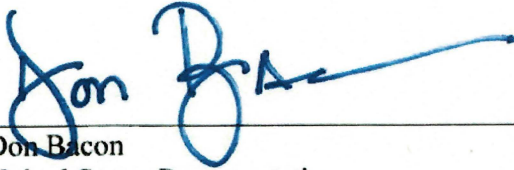
Sincerely,



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Ben Sasse
United States Senator



Don Bacon
United States Representative



Adrian Smith
United States Representative