



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

March 9, 2020

The Honorable Joe Manchin  
United States Senate  
306 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Manchin:

Thank you very much for your letters regarding the availability of high-speed broadband service in West Virginia. Bridging the digital divide is the Federal Communications Commission's top priority. In working to meet this objective, we are committed to focusing our funds on the unserved areas that need the most assistance.

Knowing whether broadband providers have met their commitments to deploy high-speed broadband service is critical, and that's why the Commission has taken several actions to ensure accountability from those providers. *First*, we now require universal service funding recipients (like Frontier) to report the specific locations where they offer high-speed broadband through the Universal Service Administrative Company's HUBB (High-cost Universal Service Broadband) Portal. *Second*, the Commission is standing up the Digital Opportunity Data Collection to create a process for public input on the accuracy of service providers' broadband maps via a crowd-sourcing portal. Importantly, we expect that such crowd-sourced data will include all the information we might need (such as the service provider, the tier of service subscribed to, and whether the testing device is relying on a wired or wireless connection to the modem) to verify whether a service provider is living up to its obligations.

I appreciate the speed test results you have submitted from your constituents. One thing those results make clear is the need for improved service in West Virginia in the near term. And I am pleased to report the Commission is already taking action.

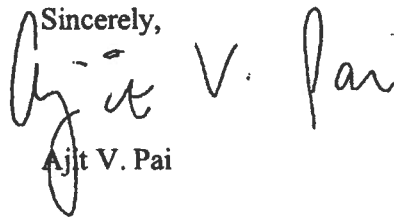
In 2018, the Commission oversaw the successful completion of the Connect America Fund Phase II Auction, in which we awarded nearly \$12 million of support to bring broadband to 7,962 locations in West Virginia. Close to 1,000 of those locations will receive gigabit broadband, bringing state-of-the-art broadband to unserved homes and businesses. All winning bidders in West Virginia have been authorized to receive support and funding is being disbursed by USAC.

Building on the success of that auction, we are moving quickly to take the next steps to bring broadband to locations that are still unserved. That's why we have created the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. This modernized approach for connecting the hardest-to-serve areas of our country represents the biggest step yet the Commission has taken to close the digital

divide. It will build on the success of the CAF Phase II auction and provide more than \$20 billion over the next decade to support up to gigabit service to millions of unserved Americans through a competitive reverse auction. And our initial estimate is that up to 130,000 locations in West Virginia could be eligible to benefit from Phase I of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

And that's not all. I have recognized that in some cases, the private sector alone cannot create a business case for bringing next-generation wireless service to rural, sparsely populated areas. Those are cases in which the FCC can and should help. That's why I will be proposing the creation of the 5G Fund to deliver \$9 billion to facilitate the 5G deployment in rural America, including \$1 billion that is specifically set aside of precision agriculture needs.

Thank you for your continued support for the Commission's efforts to improve the quality of broadband available in rural West Virginia.

Sincerely,  
  
Ajit V. Pai