

April 30, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write in support of the COVID-19 telehealth grant application submitted by the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics (Coalition OC). During this public health crisis, this funding, as provided by the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, is critical to assist eligible providers in purchasing the necessary telecommunications services, information services, and devices to enable telehealth services.

Coalition OC serves a diverse membership of 25 independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit health center organizations with 68 sites throughout Orange County. Through their membership's primary care safety net, it is my understanding that they serve more than 350,000 patients annually and have a commitment to providing quality, culturally, and linguistically appropriate health care services to all.

In Orange County, one out of ten residents receive their health care at a community health center (CHC), with more than one million encounters per year. During a public health emergency, CHCs provide triage, treatment, referrals, and work in partnership with local health departments and the State of California. This crisis is no different. CHCs are uniquely positioned to assist in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 because they are rooted in the communities they serve and are trusted sources of care for anyone that walks through their doors. CHCs, especially when better resourced and supported by the federal government, have the potential to unburden our hospitals that need to be ready and available for the sickest Californians. Furthermore, due to the high population density of Orange County, there is an increased risk of COVID-19 community transmission and Coalition OC's work is critical to mitigating that risk.

However, it is my understanding that CHCs are experiencing a huge financial challenge as they transition their organizations to rapidly respond to the need for screening and testing of COVID-19 patients while continuing to address the urgent, non-COVID-19 related needs of the vulnerable patients they serve. As health center leaders adapt to community, city, and state-level mitigation strategies and public health directives, they are making decisions in real-time to ensure patient access to a full range of services. Therefore, this project would have an immediate impact on health care providers and their patients as work continues to mitigate strain on the currently overloaded health care system.

The requested telehealth grant program funding would help Coalition OC support health care providers in the fight against the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by facilitating remote device monitoring of their vulnerable populations who are at heightened risk of contracting COVID-19 and adverse health outcomes. The use of this technology can greatly reduce transmission of the

virus between high-risk patients whilst protecting health care workers from unnecessary exposure.

Again, I appreciate your leadership in administering the \$200 million appropriated by the CARES Act to provide immediate support to health care providers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. I ask that you give Coalition OC's application full and fair consideration consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Harley Rouda". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Harley Rouda
Member of Congress