



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
455 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Emergency Special Temporary Authority of 2.5 GHz Spectrum on Tribal Lands**

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to ask the Federal Communications Commission's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau to grant an emergency Special Temporary Authority to use 2.5 GHz spectrum on tribal lands due to the devastating toll that the COVID-19 pandemic is having in Indian Country. At no time in our history has robust and universal broadband been more important to the most vulnerable among us – whether for public safety, education, health care, or digital employment viability. We respectfully request that you grant Indian tribes' temporary access, on secondary non-interference basis, to the 2.5 GHz spectrum bands and other efficient, cost effective, and available spectrum to ensure tribal communities are adequately connected during this national emergency.

As you are aware, Indian tribes have historically faced challenges accessing life-saving resources like health care and public safety services, and these shortcomings have been further exacerbated in the wake of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission has previously stated that 68 percent of tribal communities living on reservations lack access to broadband and wireless services. Connectivity barriers have created enormous disadvantages for tribal members and others living on reservations, limiting access to basic telehealth services, and making it difficult to perform fundamental activities like quickly sending patient information between health facilities and adequately uploading information. The lack of broadband and wireless services prevents tribal families from being able to connect students to educational services, connect to digital platforms for employment purposes, and receive general public safety services, among other numerous additional activities that are supported by access to wireless platforms.

While this was an enduring need for virtually tribal governments across the country even before the pandemic, the authorization of temporary authority for *all* tribal lands to utilize, on a secondary non-interfere basis, 2.5 GHz spectrum and other efficient, cost effective, and available spectrum has taken a subordinate position in this national emergency due to the number of unassociated challenges. However, the lack of wireless connectivity in Indian Country has left approximately 1.5 million people on tribal lands without access to fundamental services at the very time they need it most. Of greatest concern is a finding from the Government Accountability Office that approximately 50 percent of Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities still depend on outdated circuit connections, which leads to response times longer than any other health facility system in the country. No human should be denied the right to life-saving health and public safety services, telehealth, education, or employment while the country is shutdown during the COVID-19

pandemic, and at no other time in history has robust and universal broadband been more important to the most vulnerable among us.

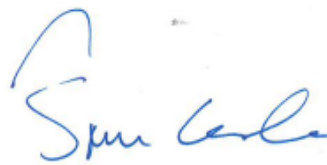
Due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, and in furtherance of the federal trust responsibility to the 574 Tribal Nations in the United States, **we respectfully request that the Commission direct the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau to grant to Tribal Nations and their eligible tribal entities an emergency Special Temporary Authority to employ the use, on a secondary non-interference basis, of 2.5 GHz spectrum and other efficient, available, and cost effective spectrum on *all* tribal lands to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic** and its current and future effects in Indian Country. In these unprecedented times, this special temporary authority on tribal lands will help tribal governments to find solutions to their immediate community emergencies and needs, and appropriately address our shared goal of closing the digital divide throughout all Indian Country.

Sincerely,



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Deb Haaland, Co-Chair  
*Congressional Native American Caucus*



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Tom Cole, Co-Chair  
*Congressional Native American Caucus*



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Betty McCollum, Co-Chair Emeritus  
*Congressional Native American Caucus*



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Ben Ray Lujan, Vice Chair  
*Congressional Native American Caucus*



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Sharice L. Davids, Vice Chair  
*Congressional Native American Caucus*

/s/ signed electronically

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Raúl M. Grijalva, Vice Chair  
*Congressional Native American Caucus*



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Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress



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Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



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Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



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Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

/s/ signed electronically

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

/s/ signed electronically

Suzan K. DelBene  
Member of Congress

/s/ signed electronically

Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

/s/ signed electronically

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

/s/ signed electronically

Kendra S. Horn  
Member of Congress