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COMMISSIONER, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE**

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Chairman Doyle, Ranking Member Latta, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify. It is a privilege to appear before you again.

Since my colleagues and I last testified before you, the country has been seized by a pandemic that has seriously altered Americans' lives. In an instant, everyday tasks that used to be carried out in person moved online—from school, to work, catching up with friends, and accessing health care.

The FCC recognized the sudden shifts that the pandemic caused and immediately went to work to ensure that Americans stayed connected.

First, we joined with the private sector to make sure that pandemic-related financial stress and our own support rules did not cut off service when Americans needed it most. Chairman Pai's Keep Americans Connected pledge opened up free Wi-Fi hotspots and kept families online through job disruptions. The Commission cleared the way for providers to donate computers and tablets so kids can learn from home, waived Lifeline rules so that under-resourced families wouldn't lose service, and provided flexibility for services vital to the deaf and hard of hearing. We also worked closely with providers that launched new programs to connect low-income families with high-speed services.

Second, we closely tracked the surge in network traffic and, when necessary, took steps to expand capacity to meet demand. In the first few weeks of the pandemic, Internet traffic surged about 25 percent on fixed networks and 20 percent on mobile ones. Peak usage, which normally hits a network around 9:00 PM local time, lasted longer and stretched into daytime hours. Network traffic not only spiked virtually overnight, it shifted at nearly the same time from urban centers to the suburbs. In addition to carriers' own network management steps, we granted carriers special temporary authority to lease spectrum from other providers and offered some of the Commission's licenses in inventory to augment capacity.

Third, we expedited support for telehealth programs at a time when treating patients at a distance has never been more important. For years, the FCC has played a key role in supporting the build out of high-speed Internet services to health care facilities. And that important work will continue. But there's a new trend in telehealth. The delivery of high-tech, high-quality care is no longer limited to the confines of connected, brick-and-mortar facilities. With remote patient monitoring and mobile health applications that can be accessed right on a smartphone or tablet, we now have the technology to deliver high-quality care directly to patients, regardless of where they are located. You can think of this as the health care equivalent of shifting from Blockbuster to Netflix.

I first learned about this new trend several years ago while visiting the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). That's when UMMC professionals explained how they launched a connected care pilot program in the Mississippi Delta to improve the lives of patients with diabetes. That program showed great results for the patients and significant cost savings compared to traditional care methods.

With Chairman Pai's support, I started the process of standing up a new FCC initiative to support this trend towards connected care.

Back then, we had no idea how important providing care at a distance would be in today's pandemic. But because of the leg work we started after my first visit to Mississippi we were able to stand up a COVID-19 telehealth program in record time; it was a matter of days from the time President Trump signed the CARES Act to an FCC order. That program has made an impact in a very short time. All told, the FCC approved \$200 million in support to 539 health care providers located in communities throughout the country. I have had the chance to visit with many of these health care providers, including on a trip two weeks ago to Ohio and Michigan.

In Perrysburg, Ohio, Ranking Member Latta and I visited "A Renewed Mind," a behavioral health organization that provides mental health and other substance abuse services in Northwest Ohio. As COVID-19 hit, they saw an immediate, twenty-fold increase in telehealth visits to treat conditions ranging from opioid dependency to fetal alcohol syndrome. They were able to meet this demand with the help of nearly \$100,000 from the FCC's COVID-19 Telehealth Program. They used that funding to acquire laptops, tablets, videoconferencing equipment, and network upgrades to help patients remotely connect with counselors, doctors, and nurses. These resources were critical to the continued care for at-risk populations during the pandemic, which has been particularly detrimental to mental health around the country.

In Michigan, I joined Congresswoman Dingell for a visit to the University of Michigan Hospital, another FCC COVID-19 Telehealth grant recipient. I was able to see first-hand how they have expanded their telehealth initiatives during the pandemic to treat a wide array of health care conditions. While they had a small telehealth practice before the pandemic, they have used the FCC funding to take video visits from about 400 per month to over 30,000.

I am pleased that the FCC's initiative supports responses like these to COVID-19, and I am excited to lead the FCC's work to kick off the separate \$100 million Connected Care Pilot program in the coming months.

All of these critical uses—telehealth, distance learning, remote work—moved and increased traffic on our networks in an instant. I'm proud to report that throughout all of this change, America's networks fared exceptionally well. While our networks delivered high quality service despite elevated traffic levels, our friends in other advanced economies were not so fortunate. Their networks strained to maintain quality and speed. In Europe, EU officials asked Netflix and other streaming platforms to significantly reduce their video quality to prevent the continent's networks from breaking. Australia made a similar request. Yet our networks showed no significant reduction in speed or increase in latency, according to independent measurements. In fact, U.S. wireless networks saw speed increases despite the significant jump in data usage. By contrast, China saw up to 40 percent reductions in download speeds, and countries all across Europe and Asia also experienced significant declines.

America's networks performed because of the private sector's massive investment in our Internet infrastructure over the past few years. In 2018, for example, America's wireless providers invested over 70 percent more per subscriber than their counterparts in Europe. In 2019, telecom crews built out more miles of high-speed fiber than ever before—over 450,000 route miles, which is enough to wrap around the Earth over 18 times. On top of that, the U.S. wireless industry invested \$29.1 billion last year—that's a four-year high, number one in the world, and four times the per capita investment that China's seeing. And we won't stop there. According to our staff's review of our infrastructure approval system, in the first half of this year alone, the pace of wireless builds and upgrades doubled. And the number of

communities benefiting from small cell builds recently increased from three- to four-fold depending on the provider.

All of these new builds and investments have increased speeds and connected more families. This benefits all of us whether or not we're in a sudden pandemic. Indeed, since 2016, Internet speeds in the U.S. have doubled and the digital divide narrowed by about 37 percent between 2016 and mid-2019. Competition has increased as well, with the percentage of Americans with more than two options for high-speed Internet service increasing by 52 percent.

The investment in networks and their performance under stress don't happen by chance. They are fostered by a light-touch regulatory approach to infrastructure.

At the Commission, I've led our wireless infrastructure modernization efforts. Together, we updated the federal historic and environmental rules that were needlessly delaying the build out of high-speed cell sites. We accelerated the construction of small cells by building on the commonsense reforms adopted by the states. We streamlined the process for swapping out utility poles to add wireless equipment. We worked with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation on a process that expedites review for wireless infrastructure builds that are essential for immediate, COVID-19 response efforts. And we recently expedited the upgrade of thousands of existing wireless towers to 5G by clarifying the rules surrounding Section 6409. This will make a particular difference in rural and remote communities.

The FCC's work to modernize our infrastructure rules enabled the private sector to make America home to the strongest 5G platform in the world. 5G is live today, not just in places like New York or San Francisco, but in Defiance County, Ohio, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I am proud of the results our reforms have delivered. And I look forward to continuing to build on these efforts.

Finally, I want to take a moment to recognize and express my gratitude to the Committee's Republican Leader Greg Walden. Since he announced his retirement, this may be the last time I have the honor to appear before him in Congress. As a former Chairman of the Committee, Congressman Walden has had one of the most consequential runs in Congress. Among his many legislative accomplishments, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Jobs Act provided the spectrum and infrastructure reforms necessary for America to lead the world in 4G and now extend that leadership into 5G. More recently, his work on the RAY BAUM's Act of 2018 operated not only as an important piece of legislation but as a fitting tribute to his friend and a lifelong advocate for expanding connectivity in this country. Of course, Congressman Walden's work on communications issues started long before his time in Congress, having owned and run a radio station in Oregon for over two decades. He carried those experiences forward into Congress demonstrating a long-standing support for broadcasters and the value they bring to their local communities. So thank you to Congressman Walden for your service to this country.

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In closing, I want to thank you again Chairman Doyle, Ranking Member Latta, former Chairman Walden, and Members of the Subcommittee for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee to accelerate the buildout of broadband networks for the benefit of the people we serve. I welcome the chance to answer your questions.