



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 15, 2021

The Honorable Bennie Thompson
U.S. House of Representatives
2466 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Thompson:

Thank you for your letter regarding universal service-supported broadband deployment reported by AT&T in Mississippi. Since my first day as Chairman, my top priority has been closing the digital divide and bringing the benefits of the Internet age to all Americans—in particular, rural Americans. And as we do so, we must demand fiscal responsibility and accountability—funds should be stretched as far as possible and they should be used for the sole purpose of delivering connectivity to consumers. We are in receipt of the letter from the Mississippi Public Service Commission, as well as the response from AT&T. Commission staff is currently reviewing this matter.

In 2015, as part of the Commission's Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II, AT&T accepted \$49,772,592 per year in universal service support to deploy to 133,931 locations in Mississippi by December 31, 2020. For CAF Phase II, carriers committed to offer voice and broadband service to a particular number of locations in specific "high-cost" census blocks and to report those locations each year to the Fund administrator, the Universal Service Administrative Company. By March 1, 2021, AT&T must correct and certify to its reported deployment through 2020. As part of its routine oversight, USAC performs verifications of locations reported by carriers, and all recipients of high-cost universal service support are subject to random audits and other investigations to ensure compliance with program rules and orders. Carriers found in violation of Commission rules may be subject to enforcement action and forfeiture, as appropriate. The Commission will remain vigilant to ensure that our rules are observed and taxpayer funds respected.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Ajit V. Pai