



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN

April 12, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

Thank you for your letter regarding our recent conversation about taking aggressive action to ensure that all Americans are connected to broadband. I wholeheartedly agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that broadband is no longer a luxury—it's now a necessity. During the last year millions of us turned to high-speed internet service to access jobs, education, healthcare and more. Yet we know that in some parts of the country finding a reliable broadband connection is difficult and for many Americans affording service can be a challenge. I believe we need to address both of these things. That is why I fully share your view that we need to find ways to get 100 percent of Americans connected in this country, no matter who they are or where they live.

Like you, I also believe that if we want to understand the infrastructure of the future—and how to build communications that will connect us all—we can begin by looking back. The example you cite of the Rural Electrification Act is exactly on point. Policymakers in the 1930's decided that instead of waiting for the electricity divide between urban and rural areas to fix itself, they would do something about it, and they passed the Rural Electrification Act to advance electric service in unserved areas. I think this history is instructive. The parallels are real. Today's digital divide looks a lot like last century's electricity divide. But this history is also a reminder that we can help build infrastructure and make change with the right policies in place. We did this with rural electrification, and we can do it again with bold action to connect all to broadband, including your constituents in Oregon.

The Commission is working hard to implement the new authorities Congress has recently provided the agency to improve access to high-speed internet service. As you know, this includes efforts to improve broadband affordability, expand access to telehealth technologies, address the Homework Gap, and build better maps that accurately reflect where high-speed service is and is not across the country. Of note, this work includes implementing the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a program you helped develop, which provides \$3.2 billion to support broadband service in low-income households. Under this program—which will be up and running in the coming weeks—eligible consumers may receive discounts of up to \$50 a

month for broadband service, and up to \$75 on Tribal Lands, as well as a discount on a computer or tablet.

Initiatives like this, however, should not be the only ones we work on in the days ahead. Across the board, we need to consider new policies to get 100 percent of us connected to broadband nationwide. I commit to working with you and others in Congress to do so and will strive to ensure the work of the Commission can help meet this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Rosenworcel", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Rosenworcel