



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

January 14, 2022

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Granger:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's administration and implementation of broadband funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that broadband is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity. Broadband is essential infrastructure for success in the 21st century and it should be available to everyone, everywhere nationwide. That is why I fully share your view that we need to find ways to get 100 percent of us connected across the country.

To that end, the Commission has worked aggressively during the last year to implement the new authorities Congress has provided the agency to improve access to high-speed internet service and develop accurate broadband mapping. As you know, this includes efforts to improve broadband affordability, expand access to telehealth technologies, close the Homework Gap, and develop better data that accurately reflect where high-speed service is and is not across the country. These programs include the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, now the Affordable Connectivity Program; COVID-19 Telehealth Program; the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program; and the Broadband Data Collection.

Recognizing that connecting everyone requires a multi-faceted, cross-agency effort, the Commission has coordinated closely with its federal partners to quickly stand-up and implement these COVID-related funding programs to ensure that we maximize, without duplicating, our collective efforts. Specifically:

- For the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, Commission staff worked with agencies across the federal government to establish and promote the program. This includes: Commission staff coordinating with the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Treasury, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Federal Trade Commission, to build awareness about the program and qualification during outreach meetings; co-hosting events with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to increase

awareness of the Program to participants in federal housing programs; hosting information sessions for Health and Human Services (HHS) stakeholders to increase awareness of the program and working with HHS to share Emergency Broadband Benefit Program data; coordinating with the Department of Education to promote the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program to current Pell Grant recipients and to streamline the enrollment process by establishing clear documentation requirements; co-hosting information sessions with the U.S. Digital Service, the Department of Agriculture (USDA), NTIA, the Department of Interior, and the Department of Education to promote the program and provide information to Tribes; serving as the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program subject matter expert for the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program monthly call with stakeholders; and collaborating with the General Services Administration (GSA) to distribute information regarding the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which was shared on GSA's public-facing website, www.usa.gov and social media channels, including information about how to apply and information from the Commission's Emergency Broadband Benefit Outreach Toolkit.

- With regard to the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, the Commission consulted with HHS to develop and implement the program, including consulting with HHS to develop a tool that scored applications and flagged those that needed further review. Commission staff also consulted with the Health Resources and Services Administration to determine where Health Professional Shortage Areas were located in order to more efficiently direct funds to health care providers in areas where the funding was needed most. In addition, Commission staff have participated in Interagency Policy Committee and interagency bi-weekly meetings on telehealth to coordinate our telehealth response with agencies across the federal government.
- With regard to the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program, the Commission coordinated with federal and state agencies to promote the availability of funding to connect students, school staff, and library patrons who lacked sufficient broadband connectivity and/or connected devices to fully engage in remote learning during the COVID-19 emergency period. For example, in June 2021, Commission staff met with representatives from the Department of Education, the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS), NTIA's Broadband Task Force, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to coordinate efforts regarding remote learning during the pandemic and promote awareness about the new program. Commission staff participated in meetings throughout the fall to provide updates regarding the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program and continues to actively coordinate with these agencies on this program.

To be clear, this list is not an exhaustive reflection of the coordination efforts of the agency and its staff, but a demonstration of the many ways the Commission has worked with our federal partners.

In addition to coordinating outreach efforts, the Commission is committed to administering its broadband funding programs efficiently in order to avoid duplication with the efforts of other agencies. This coordination with respect to implementing COVID-related broadband funding programs builds on the Commission's longstanding partnerships with other agencies. To this end, Commission staff and leadership have worked for many years with representatives of USDA's RUS to share information and best practices regarding our respective

broadband funding efforts and our duties under the law. In early 2021, shortly after Congress established new broadband deployment funding programs to be administered by NTIA, the FCC, USDA's RUS, and NTIA established an interagency working group to facilitate coordination of agency efforts and have since held regular, frequent coordination meetings. In June 2021, the three agencies entered into an agreement to share information and coordinate their funding efforts, as required by Division FF of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. The agencies have remained in close contact throughout this process, sharing data about funding allocations, including the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, and maintaining an ongoing dialogue concerning their respective efforts. Commission staff have kept NTIA and USDA's RUS fully updated on the status of FCC actions to fund broadband, providing prompt access to data reflecting provisionally and finally funded areas and locations, along with other data. Commission staff have met with NTIA mapping specialists to discuss aspects of the Broadband Data Collection currently in development and we are committed to working closely with NTIA to promote ease of access and use of the Commission's work in connection with NTIA's National Broadband Availability Map. The Commission also has engaged with the Department of Treasury, through the NTIA and USDA coordination process and individually, to provide guidance on our funding programs and their potential relationship to the Department of Treasury's ARPA programs. In addition to these efforts, the Commission is a longstanding consulting member of the American Broadband Initiative, an interagency effort led by NTIA to promote the exchange of information and coordination of broadband efforts across the federal government.

And the Commission has acted to protect limited funding appropriated by Congress for COVID-related programs to prohibit applicants and service providers from seeking and receiving duplicative funding. In the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, the Commission prohibited applicants from seeking duplicative funding and required applicants to withdraw applications if they received funding from other sources. Similarly, in the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program, the Commission adopted rules, codified at 47 CFR section 54.1712, that prohibit applicants and service providers from seeking and receiving duplicative funding. Applicants also are required to certify that they are not seeking Emergency Connectivity Fund support for services and equipment that have been purchased and reimbursed in full with other Federal pandemic-relief funding, targeted state funding, other external sources of targeted funding, or targeted gifts or other universal service programs when they apply for support. Additionally, both applicants and service providers are required to provide a similar certification when they submit their requests for reimbursement. In the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, the Commission adopted rules, codified at 47 CFR section 54.1609, to prohibit duplicative support by requiring participating providers to de-enroll subscribers upon notification by the Administrator that a subscriber is receiving the benefit discount from another participating provider, or that more than one member of a subscriber's household is receiving the benefit discount. A similar rule has been proposed for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

With regard to your request for a detailed accounting for each COVID-related funding award that will be used to fund broadband deployment or buildout, each of the FCC's COVID-related programs targets specific areas, but none has directly targeted broadband deployment or buildout. Specifically, the FCC's COVID-related funding programs, as directed by Congress,

focus on connecting health care providers, schools and libraries, and low-income consumers with broadband access during the COVID-19 pandemic, and potentially beyond. The COVID-19 Telehealth Program, for example, does not support network construction as an eligible reimbursable expense, while the EBB Program provides a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. The Emergency Connectivity Fund Program provides funding to provide schools and libraries the tools and services their communities need for remote learning during the COVID-19 emergency period. A limited exception, however, would allow build out of broadband networks, but only where there are no commercially available internet access services available to fully engage in remote learning. At this juncture, we have limited data on the Emergency Connectivity Fund-related broadband construction requests as the Universal Service Administrative Company continues to review these pending requests. When these requests have been resolved, they will be publicly available in USAC's Open Data platform.

I appreciate your interest in the Commission's implementation and administration of broadband funding and hope that you find this information helpful. The Commission is committed to working with our federal partners and Congress to help ensure that broadband, and the opportunities it affords, reaches everyone, everywhere in the country.

Sincerely,

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Jessica Rosenworcel



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRWOMAN

January 14, 2022

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's administration and implementation of broadband funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that broadband is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity. Broadband is essential infrastructure for success in the 21st century and it should be available to everyone, everywhere nationwide. That is why I fully share your view that we need to find ways to get 100 percent of us connected across the country.

To that end, the Commission has worked aggressively during the last year to implement the new authorities Congress has provided the agency to improve access to high-speed internet service and develop accurate broadband mapping. As you know, this includes efforts to improve broadband affordability, expand access to telehealth technologies, close the Homework Gap, and develop better data that accurately reflect where high-speed service is and is not across the country. These programs include the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, now the Affordable Connectivity Program; COVID-19 Telehealth Program; the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program; and the Broadband Data Collection.

Recognizing that connecting everyone requires a multi-faceted, cross-agency effort, the Commission has coordinated closely with its federal partners to quickly stand-up and implement these COVID-related funding programs to ensure that we maximize, without duplicating, our collective efforts. Specifically:

- For the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, Commission staff worked with agencies across the federal government to establish and promote the program. This includes: Commission staff coordinating with the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Treasury, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Federal Trade Commission, to build awareness about the program and qualification during outreach meetings; co-hosting events with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to increase

awareness of the Program to participants in federal housing programs; hosting information sessions for Health and Human Services (HHS) stakeholders to increase awareness of the program and working with HHS to share Emergency Broadband Benefit Program data; coordinating with the Department of Education to promote the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program to current Pell Grant recipients and to streamline the enrollment process by establishing clear documentation requirements; co-hosting information sessions with the U.S. Digital Service, the Department of Agriculture (USDA), NTIA, the Department of Interior, and the Department of Education to promote the program and provide information to Tribes; serving as the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program subject matter expert for the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program monthly call with stakeholders; and collaborating with the General Services Administration (GSA) to distribute information regarding the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which was shared on GSA's public-facing website, www.usa.gov and social media channels, including information about how to apply and information from the Commission's Emergency Broadband Benefit Outreach Toolkit.

- With regard to the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, the Commission consulted with HHS to develop and implement the program, including consulting with HHS to develop a tool that scored applications and flagged those that needed further review. Commission staff also consulted with the Health Resources and Services Administration to determine where Health Professional Shortage Areas were located in order to more efficiently direct funds to health care providers in areas where the funding was needed most. In addition, Commission staff have participated in Interagency Policy Committee and interagency bi-weekly meetings on telehealth to coordinate our telehealth response with agencies across the federal government.
- With regard to the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program, the Commission coordinated with federal and state agencies to promote the availability of funding to connect students, school staff, and library patrons who lacked sufficient broadband connectivity and/or connected devices to fully engage in remote learning during the COVID-19 emergency period. For example, in June 2021, Commission staff met with representatives from the Department of Education, the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS), NTIA's Broadband Task Force, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to coordinate efforts regarding remote learning during the pandemic and promote awareness about the new program. Commission staff participated in meetings throughout the fall to provide updates regarding the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program and continues to actively coordinate with these agencies on this program.

To be clear, this list is not an exhaustive reflection of the coordination efforts of the agency and its staff, but a demonstration of the many ways the Commission has worked with our federal partners.

In addition to coordinating outreach efforts, the Commission is committed to administering its broadband funding programs efficiently in order to avoid duplication with the efforts of other agencies. This coordination with respect to implementing COVID-related broadband funding programs builds on the Commission's longstanding partnerships with other agencies. To this end, Commission staff and leadership have worked for many years with representatives of USDA's RUS to share information and best practices regarding our respective

broadband funding efforts and our duties under the law. In early 2021, shortly after Congress established new broadband deployment funding programs to be administered by NTIA, the FCC, USDA's RUS, and NTIA established an interagency working group to facilitate coordination of agency efforts and have since held regular, frequent coordination meetings. In June 2021, the three agencies entered into an agreement to share information and coordinate their funding efforts, as required by Division FF of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. The agencies have remained in close contact throughout this process, sharing data about funding allocations, including the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, and maintaining an ongoing dialogue concerning their respective efforts. Commission staff have kept NTIA and USDA's RUS fully updated on the status of FCC actions to fund broadband, providing prompt access to data reflecting provisionally and finally funded areas and locations, along with other data. Commission staff have met with NTIA mapping specialists to discuss aspects of the Broadband Data Collection currently in development and we are committed to working closely with NTIA to promote ease of access and use of the Commission's work in connection with NTIA's National Broadband Availability Map. The Commission also has engaged with the Department of Treasury, through the NTIA and USDA coordination process and individually, to provide guidance on our funding programs and their potential relationship to the Department of Treasury's ARPA programs. In addition to these efforts, the Commission is a longstanding consulting member of the American Broadband Initiative, an interagency effort led by NTIA to promote the exchange of information and coordination of broadband efforts across the federal government.

And the Commission has acted to protect limited funding appropriated by Congress for COVID-related programs to prohibit applicants and service providers from seeking and receiving duplicative funding. In the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, the Commission prohibited applicants from seeking duplicative funding and required applicants to withdraw applications if they received funding from other sources. Similarly, in the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program, the Commission adopted rules, codified at 47 CFR section 54.1712, that prohibit applicants and service providers from seeking and receiving duplicative funding. Applicants also are required to certify that they are not seeking Emergency Connectivity Fund support for services and equipment that have been purchased and reimbursed in full with other Federal pandemic-relief funding, targeted state funding, other external sources of targeted funding, or targeted gifts or other universal service programs when they apply for support. Additionally, both applicants and service providers are required to provide a similar certification when they submit their requests for reimbursement. In the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, the Commission adopted rules, codified at 47 CFR section 54.1609, to prohibit duplicative support by requiring participating providers to de-enroll subscribers upon notification by the Administrator that a subscriber is receiving the benefit discount from another participating provider, or that more than one member of a subscriber's household is receiving the benefit discount. A similar rule has been proposed for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

With regard to your request for a detailed accounting for each COVID-related funding award that will be used to fund broadband deployment or buildout, each of the FCC's COVID-related programs targets specific areas, but none has directly targeted broadband deployment or buildout. Specifically, the FCC's COVID-related funding programs, as directed by Congress,

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Jessica Rosenworcel



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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CHAIRWOMAN

January 14, 2022

The Honorable James R. Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Comer:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's administration and implementation of broadband funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that broadband is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity. Broadband is essential infrastructure for success in the 21st century and it should be available to everyone, everywhere nationwide. That is why I fully share your view that we need to find ways to get 100 percent of us connected across the country.

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