

July 5, 2022

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L St., NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

The Honorable Brendan Carr
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
45 L St., NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

The Honorable Geoffrey Starks
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
45 L St., NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

The Honorable Nathan Simington
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
45 L St., NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Starks, and Commissioner Simington:

As you know, Section 60104 of the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) required the Commission to seek public comment regarding the future of the Universal Service Fund (USF) in consideration of the additional federal broadband spending included in IIJA. On December 15, 2021, the Commission formally initiated a proceeding pursuant to Section 60104 which consequently concluded on February 17, 2022. As the Commission examines these public comments and prepares its report to Congress, we write to request that you examine and consider updates to the types of costs that may qualify for USF reimbursement.

In our digital age, with millions of Americans relying on the internet to access work, school, and even medical care, broadband is indeed an essential service. However, as more Americans turn to the internet for an increasing number of services, network traffic has grown exponentially. In fact, video streaming services may now account for as much as 75 percent of data on rural broadband networks. We have also heard reports that some streaming services have implemented technology to test a broadband network's strength in order to maximize video quality for their end users. While this provides a better streaming service to the end customer, it has also required broadband companies to upgrade their networks—with equipment including network cards, routers, and switches—at a much quicker pace.

Rural broadband providers, who often serve communities that are especially sensitive to affordability concerns, have had difficulty raising their prices in order to keep pace with these needed upgrades. This has led to millions of dollars in unrecovered costs from streaming services being borne exclusively by small rural broadband providers—contributing further to our rural broadband digital divide.

We strongly request that, in its examination regarding the future of the USF, as required by Section 60104 of the IIJA, the Commission include consideration of the costs of data transportation, as well as the costs associated with the use, maintenance, and upgrading of the middle mile portions of rural broadband networks.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. We look forward to hearing from you on this matter. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Adam Battalio in Senator Braun's office at adam_battalio@braun.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



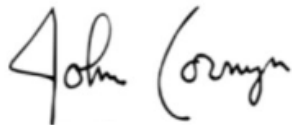
James Risch
United States Senator



Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator



John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator