

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2022

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The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel,

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need for access to high-speed broadband for many Americans when their ability to communicate with friends, family, doctors, teachers, and coworkers shifted online overnight. A high-speed broadband connection became a lifeline for many Ohioans. Yet, for many and especially those in rural communities, broadband access was not available.

Over the past two years, Congress has provided funding to help close access gaps, particularly in unserved rural communities. As we are starting to see this funding allocated to communities and providers across the country, we need to ensure that funds are used efficiently, and networks are built out in a timely manner. Access to utility poles will be a critical aspect of network buildouts across Ohio and the nation.

I appreciate the Commission's focus on connecting unserved populations across the country and its consideration of reforms that make it easier and faster to build broadband infrastructure. Access to poles is critical to expanding connectivity, especially in rural communities where it can require many poles to reach a single home or small business. The Commission understands the urgent need for change and released a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) earlier this year that considers reforms for poles access.

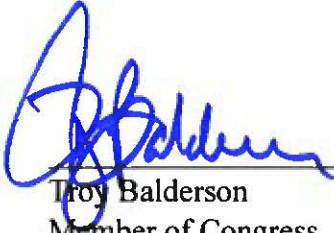
Often, network buildouts can be delayed, and costs can be increased when there are disputes over access to utility poles, which ultimately prevent access to broadband for too many of my constituents. Changes should ensure more timely access to poles through standardized permitting timelines and prioritized pole attachment disputes, and guarantee more equitable distribution of costs between broadband providers and pole owners.

I strongly encourage the Commission to bring swift action on its FNPRM to quickly expand broadband to unserved Americans across the country. Ohioans without access deserve the same opportunities for success as their neighbors with a broadband connection.

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I look forward to working with you to ensure high-speed connectivity for all as quickly as possible. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Michael Kotsovos in my office at Michael.Kotsovos@mail.house.gov if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner
The Honorable Geoffrey Starks, Commissioner
The Honorable Nathan Simington, Commissioner