

# Congress of the United States

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 17, 2019

Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We are writing to you today regarding ongoing efforts by the Federal Communications Commission to identify more precisely where fixed and mobile broadband service is available or lacking in the United States. We cannot solve our country's broadband needs until we have a full understanding of the problem. To get there, we need information.

Today, by design, the Commission's National Broadband Map overstates coverage, as it measures broadband availability at the census block level. For example, in the context of fixed broadband, an entire census block will appear as served even if service is offered to only one location within that census block. This can result in denial of broadband network funding or financing in such areas, leaving many locations without essential broadband service simply because they share a census block with a served household. Another significant concern is that the maps ultimately represent unvalidated reports from providers. While providers certify as to the accuracy of information presented, the processes used to verify such information before funding or financing decisions are made can vary – or, in many cases, such processes do not exist at all, meaning that funding or financing decisions flow directly from the maps themselves.

We are writing to ask the FCC to take immediate steps to address such concerns. In the first instance, it is important for the FCC to develop more standardized granular reporting of broadband availability – while also balancing the burdens of reporting especially for smaller operators. This could be accomplished quickly by requiring providers to submit coverage maps, called shapefiles, that provide more detailed information on where service is actually available. Moreover, regardless of the method used to demonstrate broadband availability on a more granular basis, it is important to ensure separately and distinctly the accuracy of that more granular data. As the Mobility Fund experience with wireless mapping indicated, reliance only upon self-reported data will not yield helpful information or good results. We therefore encourage the FCC to establish robust and meaningful challenge processes that will enable better validation of both fixed and mobile data prior to relying upon such data in making funding or financing decisions.

In order to achieve our shared goal to close the digital divide, we must ensure valuable and limited resources are not wasted. Resources should not be going to overbuilding existing networks, as they often have in the past due to inaccurate information, and instead go to truly unserved communities. A validated set of data based upon standardized methods of granular reporting will be essential to ensuring that resources are going to the neediest communities and universal service is available throughout America—this includes urban, suburban, rural, and tribal lands. In the interest of effectively allocating federal resources to unserved communities, we urge the FCC to take immediate action to improve its

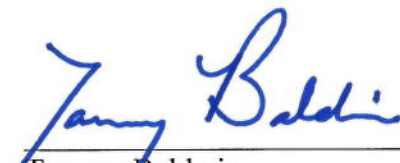
broadband maps, especially as new broadband funding initiatives like the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund are rolled out. We would like to know when the FCC plans to address this issue. Specifically, what steps has the FCC already taken, if any, what steps does the FCC plan to take, and what is the timeline for those steps?

Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to working with you as the FCC continues working to ensure all Americans have access to robust and reliable broadband.

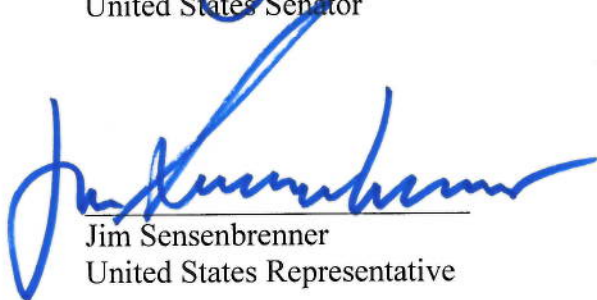
Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
United States Senator



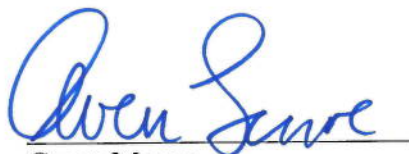
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Jim Sensenbrenner  
United States Representative



Ron Kind  
United States Representative



Gwen Moore  
United States Representative



Sean Duffy  
United States Representative



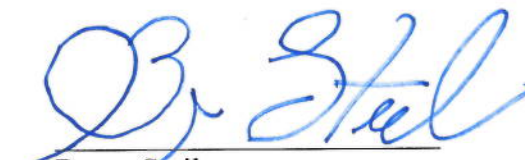
Mark Pocan  
United States Representative



Glenn Grothman  
United States Representative



Mike Gallagher  
United States Representative



Bryan Steil  
United States Representative