

Responses to Written Questions Submitted by Honorable Shelley Moore Capito to Geoffrey Starks

*Question 1.* I would like to thank you for mentioning the opioid epidemic in your testimony. This is an issue my state knows far too well. West Virginia has been devastated by the opioid epidemic. I have seen how it permeates into every aspect of our lives, affecting everyone in some way.

Could you elaborate on the successes you have seen in Kansas and Missouri and how telemedicine has helped connect nurses with physicians who are certified prescribing opioids for treatment?

Response. I am a passionate believer in the power of telehealth to improve the lives of Americans across the country. In fact, if confirmed, I plan to make improving telehealth one of my top priorities. Opioid addiction is a serious problem in our country and it has a devastating impact on families and communities. As a society, we must use every tool at our disposal to combat this scourge. Project ECHO (Extending Healthcare Community Outcomes) is one such tool. It uses telehealth technology to teach primary care providers skills so that they can treat patients themselves, rather than having to refer patients to services that may not be available in their communities. This service gives providers the tools they need to treat a serious condition that they see in their everyday practice.

Moreover, the University of Kansas Center for Telemedicine and Telehealth and Missouri Telehealth Network have ECHOs for chronic pain management, which is the predominant reason why opioids are prescribed. These pain management ECHO teams have focused on providing other methods for pain management in order to limit the risk of over prescription of opioids.

In Missouri, officials are looking at programs in other states to combat this problem. One Washington State company has clinics in eight states staffed by nurses and physician assistants who do in-person examinations, then connect through video conferencing programs with physicians who have specialty training and certification to prescribe certain medications that can ease withdrawal symptoms. In rural states like Missouri, the ability to use telehealth is particularly efficient in providing more care to more people. If confirmed, I hope we can work together to identify other ways the FCC can support these efforts.

*Question 2.* Luckily, every school in West Virginia has been provided with a fiber connection. In 2016 alone, \$19 million in E-rate funding went to West Virginia schools to bring connectivity to over 29,000 more students to support their digital learning. This is an incredibly important program for West Virginia schools.

Can you speak about the E-rate program and how it promotes universal service?

Response. The E-rate program has been a critical tool for closing the digital divide for innumerable students across the country, in both rural and urban areas, who would not otherwise have had access to broadband technologies. E-rate supports broadband connectivity in schools and libraries that allows students and members of the public to access all of the tools available on the Internet for education and civic engagement. The E-rate's importance is only growing as

connected learning becomes the norm in American classrooms. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring continuity of E-rate in promoting connectivity, and in doing so in a fiscally responsible way.

*Question 3.* What improvements can be made to make this program more efficient?

Response. As I noted in my testimony, promoting robust broadband access for all Americans will, if I am confirmed, be one of my focuses at the FCC. I look forward to working with my colleagues to preserve and promote the E-rate program as an important part of the FCC's universal service program. I also look forward to working with Commissioner Rosenworcel and my other colleagues on ways for the E-rate program to do more to close the homework gap. Given the importance of the E-rate program, we need to find ways for the program to function as efficiently and effectively as possible.

*Question 4.* In February, 2018, the FCC unveiled a new national broadband map that relies on — provider reported — form 477 data. The need for more granular data has been a concern of this Committee, even the FCC recognized that the map is just a first step in identifying the need for connectivity.

I believe that it is quite clear that the current maps are not granular enough with census block data. In your opinion how can we get more granular data to identify where broadband is lacking and to ensure federal funds do not go towards overbuilding?

Does it just require more coordination between federal agencies — like the FCC and USDA?

Response. I agree that it is critical for policymakers to have accurate broadband mapping. Bad data leads to bad policymaking and wasted dollars. The FCC currently has an open proceeding that is examining this very issue. If confirmed, I look forward to working with my colleagues and the agency's staff in further exploring the ideas raised in that record.

I also believe that improved coordination between federal agencies, including between the FCC, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the states will help improve mapping accuracy. Earlier this year, Congress encouraged such coordination when it passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, which directs NTIA to update the National Broadband Map in coordination with the FCC. This legislative directive provides yet another opportunity to improve the accuracy and granularity of this data. I look forward to working with my colleagues at the FCC and across government to improve the quality of these mapping tools to enhance the effectiveness of our policies.

*Question 5.* On February 13, 2018, I joined my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator Hassan, in introducing the Rural Reasonable and Comparable Wireless Act in order to help close the urban-rural digital divide and expand access to broadband in rural communities.

In order to bring broadband to our country's most geographically challenged and low income areas, how can we work to assure federal, state and local officials are adopting broadband deployment-friendly policies?

Response. In the Communications Act, Congress directed the FCC to ensure that people living in rural areas have communications services “that are reasonably comparable to those services provided in urban areas and that are available at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates charged for similar services in urban areas.” If confirmed, I will follow that statutory directive closely.

I applaud your and Senator Hassan’s leadership in addressing the unacceptable fact that too many Americans, especially those in difficult-to-serve rural and low income communities, do not have the same access to broadband as others in more populous or prosperous areas. Policymakers at all levels of government should ensure that our policies promote broadband deployment. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working with you and with my colleagues at the FCC to advance the ball significantly on broadband deployment.

Responses to Written Questions Submitted by Honorable Todd Young to Geoffrey Starks

Question 1. Mr. Starks, I recently had the opportunity to travel throughout Indiana with Commissioner Carr to learn more about telecommunications needs for Hoosiers in rural and urban areas.

In Indianapolis, we had the opportunity to do a walking tour of the existing small cell wireless deployment AT&T has implemented throughout the downtown area.

Their success in Indiana is due in part to two things. First, Indianapolis modernized the permitting process for small cells. Second, the state enacted small cell legislation capping fees.

Shortly after that, AT&T chose Indianapolis as one of the company's first 5G Evolution Test Markets and launched 5G Evolution in parts of the city last June.

Do you believe that the actions by our state and local government paved the way for this early investment?

Response. Each level of government — federal, state and local — has an important role to play in creating the conditions under which carriers will be motivated to make investment in telecom infrastructure. If confirmed, I will be interested in seeing how 5G investment produces benefits for the Hoosier state, and learning more about what Indiana and Indianapolis leaders have done.

Question 2. Shouldn't this be done on a national scale to incentivize investment in all communities, big and small?

Response. There are a number of open dockets on speeding infrastructure deployment to all communities and, if I am confirmed, I shall study the record in those proceedings. To the extent that your question asks whether federal legislation would be helpful to incentivize investment, I pledge to faithfully execute Congress's statutory directives. I look forward to working with you on these issues if confirmed.

Question 3. What else should the FCC be doing to expedite the process for deploying small cells necessary to win the 5G race?

Response. Given the enormous number of small cell placements that will be required for 5G, maintaining American leadership in the field will require us to think hard about our approach to wireless infrastructure in dialogue with industry, state and local leaders, tribes, and environmental and consumer groups. We must also put sufficient spectrum on the market to best serve consumers. I look forward to working with you on these issues, should I be confirmed