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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

JOHN KEAST, STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID STRICKLAND, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

March 9, 2020

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

American leadership in 5G is critical for ensuring economic growth, national security, and continued innovation benefitting consumers. As we look to the future of next generation wireless networks, it is important that these robust high-speed, high-capacity networks be available to all, including those in rural parts of the country. The recently announced Federal Communications Commission "5G Fund" can be a key component of achieving this objective. We commend your work to prioritize deployment to hard-to-serve areas through the proposed \$9 billion in support, at least \$1 billion of which will go toward advancing precision agriculture.

Given the importance of deploying 5G quickly, it is imperative that the Commission take this opportunity to distribute funding based on accurate data. Although the 5G Fund will support investment in next-generation mobile wireless services for rural areas, unless appropriately targeted the Fund risks deepening the digital divide, leaving those without unsubsidized wireless services today further behind in the years to come.

As you know, in 2018, a bipartisan group of Senators wrote to you with serious concerns about the reliability of the coverage maps that the FCC intended to use to determine eligible areas in the Mobility Fund Phase II (MF II). At the time, the maps that the Commission released appeared to misrepresent the existence of unsubsidized 4G LTE coverage and overstate the areas that were covered by existing mobile service. Given these challenges, we support your decision not to move forward with MF II using maps that could misallocate funding and welcome the move to the new 5G Fund.

Although this program appears to focus on forward looking technologies that preserve and expand service in areas that otherwise may not be economical to serve, our concerns remain with regards to reliable underlying coverage data that is used to determine funding eligibility. In your announcement of this new fund, you also addressed the continued need for more precise information about the true state of wireless coverage in rural America. Given these remaining challenges, we urge the Commission to focus on ensuring that accurate data is available—including updates to the collection of coverage data as outlined in our bipartisan, bicameral

Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability Act—so that support can be appropriately awarded based on reliable coverage maps. It is imperative that we get this right so that all Americans are able to realize the enormous promise of 5G networks.

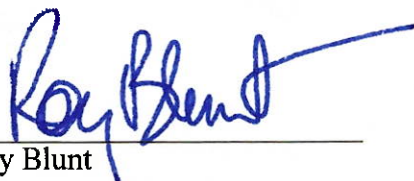
Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
CHAIRMAN
Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation



John Thune
CHAIRMAN
Subcommittee on Communications,
Technology, Innovation and the
Internet



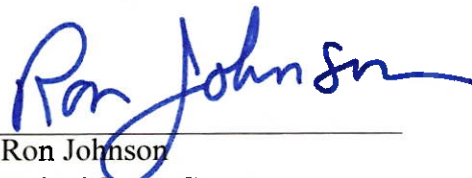
Roy Blunt
United States Senator



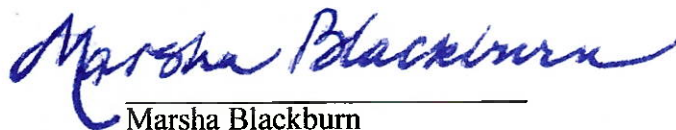
Deb Fischer
United States Senator



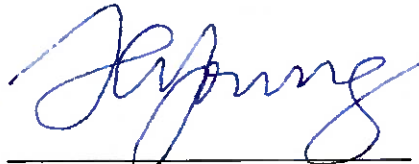
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United States Senator



Ron Johnson
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator

Cc: Hon. Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation