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June 23, 2021

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Yellen:

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of broadband connectivity. Lockdowns and social distancing measures forced a broad range of everyday activities online, including work, education, and health care. But approximately 14.5 million Americans still lack access to a broadband connection and have not been able to engage in these activities remotely. To address this issue, Congress has spent billions of dollars to fund multiple programs across the federal government that support the expansion of broadband connectivity and services to unserved and underserved locations. It is critical that both Congress and the agencies ensure that these funds are distributed in a way that avoids overbuilding, duplication of funding, and wasteful spending.

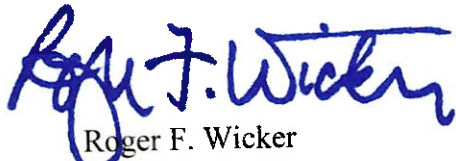
The Department of the Treasury is responsible for administering some of these funds. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act established the \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund at Treasury to assist state and local governments in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. State and local governments have been able to use this money to cover expenses incurred because of the pandemic, including investments in broadband infrastructure. Treasury is also responsible for administering \$360 billion Congress made available to state and local governments through the American Rescue Plan Act, which created the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds and the Capital Projects Fund. State and local governments can use these funds for broadband infrastructure and to “enabl[e] work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options.”

I appreciate that Treasury has reported on the costs incurred by state and local governments through the Coronavirus Relief Fund. These reports provide valuable insights into how these governments are spending taxpayer dollars, helping ensure the money is spent wisely and effectively. I ask that Treasury continue this practice by issuing quarterly reports, with the same level of granularity, as it disburses money from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds and the Capital Projects Fund until the funds are expended. Information from these reports will be critical to informing Congress’ efforts to close the digital divide, particularly as we consider additional spending on broadband infrastructure.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to working with you to get all Americans connected.

The Hon. Janet Yellen
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Roger F. Wicker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" and the last name "Wicker" clearly legible.

Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation