

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, I am here today to discuss an issue that is important not only to me personally, but also to the thousands of Ohioans I represent.

Roughly a quarter of the district I represent, Ohio's 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, is comprised of rural areas. I was born and raised in one of those more rural areas, the Appalachian community of Zanesville, Ohio, where rural broadband is of critical importance. As you know, this subcommittee has jurisdiction over telecommunications issues.

Unfortunately, many of my constituents, as well as millions of Americans, don't currently have access to high-speed broadband internet, which puts them at a disadvantage to their peers who live in more urban, connected areas. As a Congress, we are failing those Americans. In an increasingly-digital era, rural Ohioans and Americans from around the country require access to modern broadband e-Connectivity as much as those in urban and suburban communities.

With a connection to high-speed internet, rural Americans gain ever important access to health care services through the option of telemedicine and tools to fight the opioid epidemic, have increased capability to grow their small businesses by opening up the digital marketplace to small businesses so they can compete, and benefit from drastically-improved educational opportunities by providing rural students the same ability to research and access educational materials as their urban and suburban peers. Without access to these high-speed internet standards, rural Americans suffer from a disadvantage in connectivity to the online world.

According to US Census Bureau, 1 in 5 Americans lives in a rural area. In my home of Central Ohio, we know that rural Americans are the backbone of our nation's economy. Rural farmers supply food for our country, rural labor keeps our manufacturing base strong, and rural energy exports keep America powered. Yet for all they do for our country, the Federal Communications Commission recently found that more than thirty percent of rural Americans do not have access basic broadband services. In comparison, only two percent of urban Americans experience this same lack of connectivity. We, as a Congress, have the opportunity to level the playing field by helping rural Americans access critical services by supporting rural broadband e-Connectivity.

According to the FCC, "Rural and Tribal areas continue to lag behind urban areas in mobile broadband deployment. Although evaluated urban areas saw an increase of 10 Megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 Mbps upload mobile LTE from 81.9% in 2014 to 90.5 % in 2016, such deployment in evaluated rural and Tribal areas remained flat at about 70% and 64%, respectively. Approximately 14 million rural Americans and 1.2 million Americans living on Tribal lands still lack mobile LTE broadband at speeds of 10 Mbps download, 3 Mbps upload."

According to USDA, rural broadband e-Connectivity puts the United States "at the top of the world's productivity by fostering economic development, job growth, rural entrepreneurship, and innovative technologies." The USDA also found that enhanced connectivity in rural communities leads to important markers for success, including:

- An increase in productivity for farmers through the use of smart farm equipment and crop-focused innovation;
- An expansion of entrepreneurship in a global digital marketplace;

- An improvement in business operations through small towns' ability to respond to market conditions as well as the ability to manage their finances;
- Support for farmers' ability to predict production inputs, increase yields, and access potential customers worldwide;
- An expansion of educational opportunities by reversing current trends that show rural students suffer without access to high-speed internet because they lag behind in school, must drive miles into town for a Wi-Fi hotspot to do their homework, have trouble completing college applications, and fail to access important online learning tools that help students pursue a career in certain trades or attain a professional certification;
- And finally, an enhancement of healthcare options by enabling health care professionals to spread awareness of local resources, prevent prescribing mistakes and pharmacies through access to controlled substance registries, and provide addiction care in remote locations through telemedicine.

As you can tell, rural broadband access would do a world of good for millions of Americans currently living without this resource and would give our country an advantage in the global space. This is why I will continue to be a vocal advocate of this issue and why I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 3162, which would require broadband providers to create an improved National Broadband Map that is significantly more accurate and granular as well as subject to an ongoing and multi-faceted challenge, validation, and refinement process. I ask you all to consider the millions of Americans who are starving of access to rural broadband e-Connectivity. These rural Americans are no less deserving of the opportunity to succeed than their peers.

Thank you all for your time and I welcome any questions you may have.