

**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Promoting Broadband Infrastructure Investment”**

Thank you Chairman Walden for calling today’s hearing. Thanks also to our witnesses for being here today.

This subcommittee has become an example of how real bipartisan efforts can create real results. Today we continue that tradition. Discussions about whether to invest in our nation’s infrastructure should not have two sides--whether we are talking about roads, bridges, or communications networks. The priority in Congress should never be if we should invest in infrastructure; it should be only how we invest. To build a sound infrastructure, both industry and the government must contribute. Sacrificing either will only lead to failure.

Our focus today is on our nation’s broadband networks in particular. The Internet has become integral to all of our lives. And in many ways, our broadband infrastructure is a bright spot for our economy. While the government contributes billions of dollars in grants and an updated Universal Service program, private investment has been the primary driver behind the growth of our networks. Over the past twenty years, the private sector invested \$1.4 trillion in their networks --a trend I expect will continue. So it is no wonder that broadband capacity has doubled about every two years. And just as important, this investment creates real jobs across the country.

But despite this success, our work is not done. We are fortunate in New Jersey to be one of the most connected states in the country, but rural areas like Vermont or Iowa and Tribal lands in New Mexico aren’t so lucky. The most recent data released by the FCC shows that Americans living in those areas disproportionately lack access to broadband – 53% of rural Americans and 63% of Americans living on Tribal lands and in the U.S. territories do not have access to the new benchmark definition of broadband. We must continue to look for ways to help these communities.

So I am interested to hear from our witnesses about what policies work and which ones need to be updated. I also want to hear about how to make sure our communications networks are resilient enough to withstand emergencies.

I hope that ideas generated today will be the inspiration for more bipartisan work going forward.