

**Opening Statement of Chairman Marsha Blackburn
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Legislative Hearing on Four Communications Bills.”
March 22, 2018**

(As prepared for delivery)

Good morning and welcome to our second legislative hearing of 2018. A little less than two months ago, we sat here in this room discussing 25 pieces of legislation addressing broadband infrastructure representing all the views on the table. Last month, we shocked the naysayers by shepherding many of the Subcommittee’s top priorities through the full Committee unanimously in RAY BAUM’S Act. Today, just as that package is about to head toward the President’s desk, we’ve got four more bipartisan bills that address everything from combating illegal pirate radio to identifying ways technology can help prevent suicide across the country. I couldn’t be more pleased with the work of Members of the subcommittee and all the important initiatives we’ve got going on this year.

I’d also like to commend Congressman Stewart on being a champion for the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, which currently has 78 cosponsors, including seven of our Subcommittee members: Mr. Bilirakis, Ms. Clarke, Ms. Eshoo, Mr. Flores, Mr. McKinley, Mr. Rush, and Mr. Tonko. Suicide is the 10th leading cause

of death in Tennessee, and this legislation would make it easier for those facing a mental crisis to get the help they need with a dedicated N-1-1 number.

We'll also be discussing Mr. McKinley and Mr. Welch's bill, the Rural Reasonable and Comparable Wireless Access Act, which takes a new perspective on getting wireless broadband out to rural areas. This subcommittee has long been looking for ways to close the digital divide, and today we will be discussing another potential solution.

And speaking of infrastructure, another bill which could help spur investment in broadband infrastructure is Mr. Latta and Mr. Schrader's Small Entity Regulatory Relief Opportunity Act, or SERRO (*Sare-oh*). Small entities across the country, regardless of technology, face miles of red tape at the FCC to comply with regulations designed for large providers. Money that these small, often rural entities spend on complying with regulations is money that they could instead be investing in broadband deployment, and it's important for us and for the Commission to keep this in mind instead of assuming that one size should fit all in every case.

Finally, we'll be discussing Mr. Lance and Mr. Tonko's PIRATE Act, which many Members of the subcommittee have helped work on;

including Mr. Collins, Mr. Tonko, Mr. Bilirakis, Mr. Green, Mr. Moulton, Mr. King, and Ms. Dingell. Illegal pirate radio disrupts access to important public safety communications, including our nation's Emergency Alert System and critical aviation frequencies. These illegal broadcasts deprive Americans of important programming provided by legitimate license-holders serving the public interest. It's high time we pay more attention to the harm being done to consumers and broadcasters alike.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here, and with that I will yield one minute to the Vice Chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. Lance.