



July 16, 2018

Honorable Pete Olson
House of Representatives
2133 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Representative Olson:

On behalf of the nearly 850 small, rural broadband network providers represented by NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association, thank you for your work on HR 4845, the Connecting Communities Post Disasters Act of 2018.

As you know, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make the business case for broadband network deployment and ongoing operations through much of rural America due to the challenges of distance, population density, and the high costs of deploying, maintaining, and upgrading networks—challenges that are often compounded by cumbersome and duplicative state and federal permitting requirements. While these barriers to broadband deployment are present in rural areas even when the weather is excellent, the occurrence of a natural disaster heightens the daunting task of restoring service to customers as quickly as possible.

The Connecting Communities Post Disasters Act of 2018 would provide a five-year categorical exclusion from environmental and historical reviews for communications facilities in presidentially-declared disaster areas to aid the replacement and improvements to such facilities. Small rural telcos would welcome the changes of the kind contemplated by HR 4845, which would allow them to focus on the work of restoring and improving service in the wake of a disaster instead of spending precious time and resources on securing duplicative permitting approvals for areas that have already been disturbed by previous network deployments.

Thank you for your leadership on federal permitting reform and broadband deployment. We look forward to working with you on these issues as HR 4845 moves toward enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shirley Bloomfield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shirley Bloomfield
Chief Executive Officer