

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Protecting Consumers and Competition: An Examination of the T-Mobile
and Sprint Merger”
February 13, 2019**

As Prepared for Delivery

I'd like to echo my colleagues' warm welcome to all the witnesses here today and thank you all for making the time to come share your thoughts with the Subcommittee today. We have generally avoided hearings focused on any specific transaction in an effort to allow the regulators who are responsible for assessing them to do their work, as much as possible, free from intense political influence. It is my hope the experts at the FCC and DOJ — who as we speak are reviewing this transaction, and its potential impact on the public interest and competition — will continue their analysis in this vein.

In a district like mine that gives new meaning to the word “rural,” coverage gaps engulf huge areas of the map, in places with as few as one person for every square mile. For Americans in some of these areas, who have been awaiting the promise of broadband for far too long, with the connectivity, educational and economic empowerment it brings, any news on this front is cause for great celebration.

So we have been appreciative of T-Mobile's rapid buildout efforts in Central Oregon as a result of its newly acquired 600 MHz licenses. With this Committee's bipartisan work last year to keep the repack on track with an additional \$1 billion dollars for reimbursement of broadcasters' moving expenses, more and more districts are realizing the benefits of the groundbreaking incentive auction that we made possible. The hope is finally becoming a reality in these areas. And I think it's well worth noting T-Mobile's efforts so far in delivering on its promises, in some cases ahead of schedule.

Turning to the particular transaction at issue today, experts including some of our witnesses here are painting some very different pictures of its potential effects. Going forward, we want to see consumers paying less for more data. We want to see more choices and intensified competition in the wireless and in-home broadband markets. We want to see faster rural deployment and better service. And we need America to lead in the global race to 5G, reaping economic benefits and transformative services for all Americans.

As we consider the testimony of these witnesses, we need to take a holistic view, instead of focusing on a particular metric— like those who insist that the government must intervene to preserve four nationwide

wireless operators at all costs. We have to consider scale and operational efficiencies in that equation, and the rapidly changing characteristics of the wireless marketplace, especially the convergence of functionality with nontraditional competitors such as cable and satellite operators. With almost 50 percent of digital video now consumed on smartphones, wireless service is not what it once was, and with the advent of 5G the capabilities are evolving at an exponential pace. So it's important for legislators to adjust our expectations to this reality and resist the call for artificial market constraints that may not make any sense in a 5G world.

I look forward to hearing the perspectives of each of our witnesses as we consider the current state of the marketplace overall and how best to reach the objective so important to us all – the world's fastest and best 5G ecosystem, secure, affordable and accessible to every American.