



May 5, 2021

The Honorable Michael Doyle
Chair
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
Subcommittee on
Communications & Technology
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Latta
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
Subcommittee on
Communications & Technology
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Doyle and Ranking Member Latta:

On behalf of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC), we thank you for holding a hearing on, "Broadband Equity: Addressing Disparities in Access and Affordability."

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation's healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century healthcare system that makes affordable high-quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC – hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, post-acute care providers, home care providers, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare through a patient-centered approach.

The COVID-19 health pandemic has highlighted the need to improve broadband access to rural populations. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has found that approximately 18 million Americans do not have access to high-speed internet. Over 26% of that population lives in rural areas.¹ The lack of robust broadband infrastructure has limited rural access to essential digital services, such as receiving care via telehealth. Many of these communities already struggle from a lack of resources and their inability to receive robust broadband connectivity exacerbates this problem.

HLC appreciates Congress' role in increasing investment in broadband in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act*, but encourages additional support to strengthen broadband connectivity in rural communities and ensure that consumers are able to afford these services. Additionally, HLC encourages the Committee to examine issues of broadband connectivity in urban communities. Many of these communities also do not receive robust connectivity options and improving technology in these areas will also enable these individuals to access essential health services.

¹ Harmeet Kaur, *Why rural Americans are having a hard time working from home*, CNN (April 29, 2020), <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/29/us/rural-broadband-access-coronavirus-trnd/index.html>.

HLC looks forward to working with you on steps to better connect vulnerable populations to broadband services. Should you have any questions please contact Tina Grande at (202) 449-3433 or tgrande@hlc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mary R. Grealy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" and last name "Grealy" clearly legible.

Mary R. Grealy
President