

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Robert E. Latta  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
“Broadband Equity: Addressing Disparities in Access and  
Affordability”  
May 6, 2020**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Last week, President Biden addressed the nation and outlined a slate of new ideas and programs that, if enacted, will radically redefine the role of government in our daily lives. While many of the goals he outlined are important, it would be a mistake for the government to fundamentally reshape entire industries before understanding what the data and research says is needed.

Let me be clear: we must continue to support policies that will help ALL Americans get connected. When it comes to broadband affordability, never have consumers gotten more for less. Internet prices have dropped dramatically, and speeds and competition have both increased.

According to the most recent Communications Marketplace Report by the FCC, the cost of the most popular plans has decreased by 20 percent, while speeds increased by 16 percent since 2015. And, as a result of more Americans upgrading their services, the average cost of the highest speed offerings have dropped by 37 percent, while simultaneously increasing speeds by 27 percent.

Broadband subscriptions in urban areas have increased by 21.8 percent over the past 5 years. And despite the claims of consolidation, the number of broadband providers has increased over 25 percent from 2014 to 2019, with urban core areas seeing an increase of 30 percent.

This advancement is the result of FCC policies that streamlined government regulations that have promoted competition and private sector investment in low-income programs and network upgrades. This did not happen because of government intervention and burdensome mandates like those suggested by the Biden-Harris Administration. Yet despite these improvements in broadband offerings, some Americans still choose to not adopt broadband.

Mr. Chair, I request unanimous consent to submit the study of the Technology Policy Institute for the record.

The COVID-19 pandemic shook our country and way of life, causing many hardships for millions of Americans. As an internet connection became a daily necessity, Congress enacted over \$10 billion dollars in funding to support broadband adoption by low-income Americans and to help those who were struggling during the pandemic stay connected. While that money has not yet been made available, we must make sure it goes to those who were hardest hit.

We must study the landscape of what our country looks like after all of the funding recently made available is distributed. Congress cannot continue to blindly spend billions of hard-earned, taxpayer money without knowing where that money is needed, and what problems are

left to solve. As much of the research on broadband adoption has shown, there is not a clear indication of what factors contribute to non-adoption. Policymakers must be clear-eyed on what the barriers are before trying to propose solutions.

While I expect we will hear a lot today about the need to put the government in control of broadband rates so that more Americans will be able to afford it, I would urge the Committee to be thoughtful about all the progress this country has made in the past decade on broadband technology before rushing to radically undermine the current system.

We can and should meaningfully boost broadband access and adoption by all Americans, but throwing money at the problem without understanding the facts will only waste taxpayer money and not solve the problem.