

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Member Rep. Lizzie Fletcher

Hearing on “Strengthening Our Communications Networks to Meet the Needs of Consumers”

October 6, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Pallone for yielding to me, and thank you Chairman Doyle for holding this important legislative hearing today, where we are looking at useful proposals to help keep our communities connected.

I am glad that my bill, H.R. 5058, the *Broadband Incentives for Communities Act*, is one of the proposals we will discuss today.

This bill grew out of partnerships in my community in Houston, where we have learned important lessons in the effort to build our broadband networks.

As this committee works to address the digital divide—we have seen its impacts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic across all communities—and as Congress has invested in significant broadband expansion and is continuing that work in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, we must ensure that our local governments **are prepared to take advantage of these efforts and funds.**

My bill does just that: it provides grants to local governments to support their processing of applications for broadband deployment.

These grants could be used to build remote or electronic submission portals or to hire additional staff to process applications, for example.

The program would be voluntary and would not preempt any local zoning or permitting processes.

It simply serves to make sure that these crucial funds are efficiently and effectively disbursed.

Thank you, and I yield back.