



February 16, 2022

The Honorable Michael Doyle
Chair
Subcommittee on Communications
Communications
and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Latta
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Doyle and Ranking Member Latta:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce respectfully submits the following statement for the record for the House Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Communications and Technology hearing titled "Connecting America: Oversight of NTIA." We commend the Subcommittee for holding this important hearing to exercise oversight over the National Telecommunication and Information Administration's ("NTIA") broadband programs and new responsibilities under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ("IIJA").

America's communications networks play an essential role in connecting Americans and are revolutionizing the way that people work, learn, seek medical care, and communicate with friends and family. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the private sector has played a critical role in keeping the "digital lights" on for the economy. The Chamber believes that broadband adoption, access, and affordability serve as crucial building blocks to connect all Americans and enable the internet economy to flourish.

The IIJA provides NTIA a leading role in implementing the IIJA's broadband programs and helping connect all Americans, primarily through the \$42 billion Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment ("BEAD") Program. As NTIA continues to implement the program, the Chamber urges this Subcommittee to provide ongoing oversight to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly and that NTIA adheres to the IIJA's statutory guardrails and Congressional intent.

In particular, the Chamber recommends that the Subcommittee keep several high-level points in mind. First, while the Chamber appreciated the opportunity to file comments in NTIA's recent Request for Comment, we believe it is critical that NTIA proactively engages with industry stakeholders as they implement IIJA's broadband

programs. NTIA's responsibilities in the IJJA are extensive and will require significant input from expert agencies, such as the Federal Communications Commissions, as well as industry stakeholders most familiar with on the ground realities of broadband deployment.

Second, the Chamber suggests that taxpayer funds provided in the IJJA for broadband be used efficiently and responsibly. NTIA can effectuate this goal through adhering to the IJJA's requirement that unserved areas are to be addressed first to enable all Americans to be connected to the internet. Also, NTIA should coordinate with other federal and state entities to prevent the duplicative use of limited taxpayer funds given the number of ongoing private sector broadband projects as well as existing federal and state broadband deployment programs.

Third, the Chamber supports using federal funding to assist in broadband deployment, but we also urge policymakers to consider policy options that would lower the cost of broadband deployment, such as through permitting reform. Similarly, policymakers should be avoid imposing policies that would increase the cost of deployment, including through domestic content restrictions and novel, onerous regulatory requirements on broadband.

The United States has a unique opportunity to help close the digital divide and bring internet access to millions of Americans. Consequently, the effective implementation of IJJA's broadband programs will be necessary to achieve this objective. The Chamber looks forward to working with NTIA and Congress on IJJA implementation and other policy solutions to connect all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Quaadman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Quaadman
Executive Vice President
Chamber Technology Engagement Center
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology