

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 22, 2021

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chair
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20554

Chair Rosenworcel:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans have relied on their high-speed broadband connections more than ever to work, educate their children, access health care, and connect with loved ones. Unfortunately, these benefits remain out of reach for millions of Americans, particularly those living in rural and remote areas, who continue to lack access to broadband connections.

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act,¹ the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (the Act),² the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA),³ and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act,⁴ Congress provided billions of dollars for programs across federal agencies to bridge broadband connectivity gaps.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is one of the key agencies charged by Congress with administering broadband funding. Through these funding packages, the FCC received approximately \$450 million to administer the COVID-19 Telehealth Program; \$3.2 billion to administer the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program; \$7.17 billion to administer the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program; and an additional \$14.2 billion to transition the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program into the Affordable Broadband Benefit.

As you work to allocate remaining funding, we encourage you to coordinate with other federal agencies administering their respective broadband funding programs to ensure that you complement, rather than duplicate, each other's efforts. Further, as the FCC has invested billions of Universal Service Fund (USF) dollars towards broadband deployment in unserved areas, it is crucial to ensure that other agencies are not undermining these investments through wasteful overbuilding. This need is even more pressing given that the FCC has not yet completed its broadband map as required by the Broadband DATA Act⁵ to provide a clear picture of where broadband gaps remain throughout the nation.

¹ P.L. 116-136 at 138 Stat. 281 et seq.

² P.L. 116-260

³ P.L. 117-2

⁴ P.L. 117-58

⁵ "Broadband DATA Act," P.L. 116-130 at 47 U.S.C. 641 et seq.

To gain a better understanding of your efforts to administer these funds and coordinate the FCC's broadband programs with other federal agencies, we request your response to the following questions no later than January 14, 2022:

1. What steps are you taking to coordinate the FCC's COVID-related broadband funding programs with those led by other federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Education?
2. What steps are you taking to protect USF ratepayer dollars—including the FCC's investments in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction—from being duplicated by other agencies?
3. What specific steps are you taking to track and report to the USDA and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration the locations where the FCC is funding broadband projects, pursuant to section 904(b)(3) of Division FF of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021?⁶

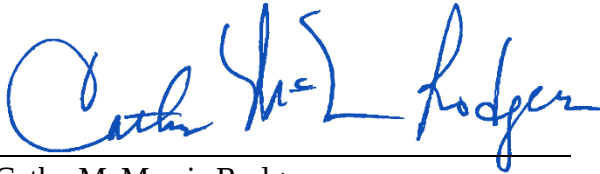
In addition, we request that you provide a detailed accounting of any CARES Act or Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 funds that you have awarded or allocated to support broadband connectivity. Specifically, we request the following information no later than January 14, 2022:

4. For each COVID-related funding award that will be used to fund broadband deployment or buildout:
 - a. The geographic area and/or location(s) that the project will cover and the level of service (i.e., bandwidth and latency) that will be provided to the covered area and/or location(s);
 - b. Whether an existing provider already offers broadband service in the covered geographic area and/or location(s); and
 - c. Whether funds have been awarded through other federal programs (such as the Department of the Treasury's Coronavirus Relief Fund, Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, or Capital Projects Fund; the USDA's ReConnect or Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant programs; the Department of Commerce's Broadband Infrastructure Program, Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, or Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program; and the Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund) to provide broadband service to the covered geographic area and/or location(s) and the amount of such funds.

⁶ Pub. L. No. 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182 (December 27, 2020).

Thank you for your assistance, and we look forward to your timely responses. If you have any questions, please contact Kate O'Connor at (202) 225-3641 or Lamar Echols at (202) 225-5074.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations

Cc: The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chair, Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair, Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget