

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Bob Latta
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology**

“Oversight of the FCC.”

June 21, 2023

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Good morning, and welcome to today’s oversight hearing of the Federal Communications Commission. I want to begin by welcoming the Commissioners back to the subcommittee. It has been over a year since the Commission last testified before us, and to say we have a lot to cover in today’s hearing would be an **understatement**.

The FCC is an independent agency charged by Congress to regulate interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable. Among its responsibilities include administering the Universal Service Fund (USF),

holding spectrum auctions, and regulating broadcast licensees. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress added to this list by charging the FCC with administering the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), Emergency Connectivity Fund, and the COVID-19 Telehealth program—both totaling billions of dollars.

Closing the digital divide is a key priority for this Committee. Last month, the FCC released an updated version of its National Broadband Map, which showed that **8.3 million homes and businesses** still lack access to high-speed broadband. This map, produced in accordance with a bill **I led, the Broadband DATA Act**, is *significantly* better than previous maps. But concerns with the “pre-production” draft that overstated coverage in some

areas and missed communities in others highlight the need for oversight of this effort.

This oversight is **especially** important because the National Telecommunications and Information Administration plans to use this latest map to make allocations to states for the \$42 billion BEAD Program on June 30. With the amount of money at stake, we need confidence these maps are as accurate as possible so states get the right allocation to connect all their unserved and underserved residents.

As I mentioned, the FCC administers the USF, the ACP, and the ECF programs. Congress' significant investment in broadband raises questions about the future of the USF.

- For example, what, if anything, should the USF fund once the infrastructure money is spent?
- How should Congress address duplicative programs like ACP and Lifeline?
- Who should contribute to the USF?

I hope today's discussion can help us answer these questions.

Unfortunately, we also know these programs are ripe with waste, fraud, and abuse. The FCC Inspector General has issued two advisories related to enrollment fraud in ACP and its predecessor program, the Emergency Broadband Benefit, two programs created in response to the COVID pandemic.

And earlier this year, the Government Accountability Office found the FCC did not have adequate antifraud controls for the program. I hope the Commission takes these findings seriously and implements the right oversight and controls to prevent additional fraud from taking place.

Finally, we need to fully fund the Supply Chain Reimbursement, or “Rip-and-Replace” Program, which Congress created to help small providers remove unsecure equipment from their networks. This Committee unanimously passed H.R. 3565, the Spectrum Auction Reauthorization Act, to immediately address this shortfall and restore the FCC’s spectrum auction authority, which expired on March 9.

Providers are required to begin removing this equipment by July 15 and they need the certainty they can get reimbursed for this effort. **This is a serious problem for rural America.** Without these funds, small carriers could be forced to shut down their networks, leaving their customers without a connection. We cannot let this happen and need the full House and the Senate to act on this legislation immediately.

I look forward to discussing the important issues before the Commission and thank you to the Commissioners for being here today.

I now yield to my colleague, the Ranking Member of this subcommittee, the gentlelady from California's Seventh District, for her opening statement.