

Opening Statement of Chairman Robert E. Latta
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Strengthening American Communications Leadership with Open
Radio Access Network”

January 17, 2024

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Good afternoon, and welcome to today’s hearing to discuss Open RAN technology and the state of America’s communications networks.

Wireless connectivity is critical to our everyday lives. From browsing the Internet on-the-go to precision agriculture, Americans are increasingly reliant on having a wireless connection. Companies are rapidly deploying and upgrading their networks across the country to meet this demand.

Open Radio Access Networks, or Open RAN, presents a tremendous opportunity for the United States.

Open RAN promotes vendor diversity and competition in the supply chain. It allows carriers to mix-and-match equipment from different vendors in their networks so they are not locked into a single end-to-end vendor. In traditional wireless networks, it can be costly to physically replace components of the network when necessary, whereas Open RAN allows many fixes to happen with a software upgrade. More broadly, Open RAN will diversify our 5G supply chain, lower equipment costs, strengthen the number of trusted vendors, and help prevent our adversaries from disrupting our networks.

The last time this subcommittee held a hearing to examine the Open RAN marketplace was in 2021, and so much has happened in the last three years. DISH deployed the nation's first fully open 5G network, AT&T announced that 70 percent of its traffic will occur over Open RAN networks by 2026, and Congress created the \$1.5 billion Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation

Fund at NTIA- over \$98 million of which has already been distributed.

American leadership in wireless technology is critical for both economic and national security. American companies—large and small—are leading in developing and deploying Open RAN technology. Across the Open RAN ecosystem, these companies are developing everything from radios, to software, to the system integration tools needed for this technology to succeed. While engaging with allied partners is a crucial part of making Open RAN a success, we must continue to support the efforts of U.S. companies working in this space to preserve American leadership.

I am grateful that this issue has bipartisan support. This Committee has long prioritized securing the communications supply chain and supporting the development of Open RAN technology. We passed the

Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act to support the rip-and-replace of untrusted equipment from our networks. We passed the Secure Equipment Act to ensure that untrusted equipment is not authorized in the United States. And we supported the creation of the Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund to support further development of Open RAN in the United States. We must now ensure that rip-and-replace is fully funded, and continue our oversight of the Innovation Fund to ensure that awards are used to facilitate the development and deployment of Open RAN.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, who represent a cross-section of the O-RAN ecosystem. Thank you for appearing before us today.

I now yield to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, the gentlelady from the Seventh District of California, for her opening statement.