

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on Republican Efforts to Undermine Democrats' Historic Broadband Investments

March 5, 2025

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's \$42 billion BEAD Program was designed to ensure every American household can connect to high-speed, reliable, and affordable internet. Not one Republican on this Committee supported those investments. Instead, Committee Republicans have done nothing but undermine our efforts to deploy more reliable and affordable broadband. I regret that today's hearing is more of the same – with an eye in the rear-view mirror.

Just so the record is clear, Former Assistant Secretary Alan Davidson and his team at NTIA rose to the occasion to build and implement the largest and most sophisticated broadband program in our nation's history—one with 56 different nerve centers and unique sets of considerations—with independent planning and decision-making taking place in every single state and territory.

Three states have received approval of their final proposal. Four states have completed their selection of internet service providers after wildly successful application rounds, and 30 states are in the midst of running highly promising application rounds.

In six weeks, however, the Trump Administration has not moved one state forward in the process. This is not a surprise since the Administration has instead prioritized dismantling the federal government by gutting agencies and firing federal employees. And Congressional Republicans have silently watched from the sidelines.

And we know Elon Musk is salivating over the prospect of steering BEAD dollars to his companies. Just yesterday the Wall Street Journal reported Musk's SpaceX and Starlink could receive up to \$20 billion worth of BEAD funding under new plans being developed inside the Commerce Department. Musk's a grifter and Republicans are going to just stand by and watch.

To be clear, many of the changes our colleagues have suggested for BEAD can be done without delays or mandates. Loosening funding requirements they don't like—while misguided—does not require states to go back to the drawing board. The pauses we see at the Department of Commerce, however, are like shackles on broadband providers in Louisiana, Nevada, and Delaware, who need only basic administrative approvals to begin their work in as little as six weeks. Instead, companies are sitting on tons of supply with a labor force questioning if there will be work next month.

Make no mistake, the current threat to the BEAD program could be avoided if only Republicans in the Trump Administration would get out of their own way and let this program

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move forward as intended. This opportunity to connect every American to reliable, high-speed internet will not come around again.

I yield the balance of my time to Representative Carter of Louisiana