

From the Office of the President & CEO

Fiber Broadband Association
3050 K Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20007, USA

September 3, 2025

The Honorable Roger Williams
Chairman, Small Business Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nydia M. Velázquez
Ranking Member, Small Business Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Letter for the Record, September 3, 2025, Full Committee Hearing: “Wired for Growth: How Expanding Broadband Can Revitalize Rural Small Businesses”

Dear Chairman Williams and Ranking Member Velázquez,

The Fiber Broadband Association (FBA) appreciates the commitment by this Committee to ensure that reliable, high-speed internet is delivered to all Americans, regardless of where they live, by facilitating efforts to support fiber deployment.

FBA is committed to accelerating the deployment of fiber broadband networks as a foundational strategy for achieving digital opportunity, revitalizing rural economies, and empowering small businesses. This initiative is supported by a blend of private capital and targeted public broadband grants, with grant funding playing a pivotal role in bridging the infrastructure gap.

In today’s knowledge-driven economy, rural communities continue to fall behind metropolitan areas in broadband access, hindering their ability to fully participate in the digital marketplace. A study by the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) underscores that broadband is undoubtedly critical infrastructure with high broadband adoption of over 80% in rural counties spurring business growth by 213%, per capita income by 18%, and GDP growth by 44%, in contrast to communities with low to no usage.¹ This translates into a real-life impact of an average increase of nearly \$500 of additional income per person each year.² Realizing these benefits, however, requires sustained public investment in high-quality fiber broadband, particularly through targeted use of federal grant programs to close the digital divide and unlock rural economic potential.

In Charlottesville, Virginia, a rural town about 100 miles southwest of Washington, D.C. and 70 miles northwest of Richmond, Virginia in Albermarle County, the investment of taxpayer dollars has proven to

¹ Center on Rural Innovation, “Beyond Connectivity: The Role of Broadband in Rural Economic Growth and Resilience,” September, 2024.

² *Id.*

be successful, with nearly the entire county expected to be connected by the end of 2025.³ What began as a dedication to fiber and a launch of 35 miles of fiber networks by local provider, Blue Ridge InternetWorks, has expanded to nearly 726 miles through strategic use of state and federal grants and partnerships with providers like Lumos and Brightspeed.⁴ As a result, private sector job growth increased by approximately 35% from 2015 to 2019, housing value in Charlottesville increased by \$4 million per year, and the city is now top-ranked in Digital Microbusiness Density, a key indicator of small business health.⁵

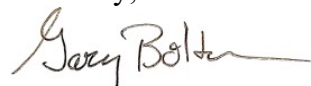
Early adoption of high-speed broadband has also proven to be effective in reducing unemployment rates, housing value, and small business vitality in other rural communities like Hamilton County, Tennessee, and rural neighborhoods in Iowa, Minnesota, Texas, Louisiana, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, and Missouri.⁶

Moreover, it is critical that efforts to minimize permitting and deployment barriers continue. Challenges including inconsistent regulations across states, navigating land access and right of way permissions, high upfront costs, and geographic obstacles remain. To combat these issues, FBA provides solutions like Fiber Finder that help providers and policymakers map existing fiber networks, visualize deployment options, and identify target areas for expansion. FBA also assists states in calculating the cost-per-location for new fiber projects with its Financial Model in addition to conducting studies, providing free resources, and training.

Accordingly, FBA encourages this Committee to recognize fiber broadband as critical infrastructure and prioritize federal investment in its expansion to revitalize rural communities and their small businesses.

We look forward to working with the Committee and stand ready to support this shared goal in ensuring Americans in rural communities have access to fiber broadband.

Sincerely,



³ Fiber Broadband Association, “Broadband Community Profile: Fiber Anchors Sustained Economic Development Charlottesville, Virginia,” January, 2025.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*



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