June 10, 2020

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger:

On March 23, 2020, S. 1822, the Broadband DATA Act, was signed into law by President Trump. This legislation requires the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to establish rules to collect broadband availability data to improve our nation’s broadband coverage maps, but the law remains unfunded. Once this law is implemented and funded, FCC and other agencies will be able to rely on accurate broadband maps when they distribute federal funds for broadband deployment, which will lead to a more efficient use of federal dollars. As you are considering future appropriations bills, we urge you to fund this law fully.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, the availability of broadband service is a critical driver of the economy, distance learning, and telehealth services. Given the pivotal role that private communications networks serve in connecting Americans, we must ensure that the FCC has the tools it needs to facilitate efficiently the deployment of these networks. The FCC currently spends about $8 billion dollars per year to support universal service of advanced telecommunications services, much of which supports broadband deployment to unserved areas. Closing the digital divide and promoting broadband deployment have long been bipartisan priorities and funding the Broadband DATA Act will improve those efforts.

While we are focused on responding to the current health emergency and suppressing its reach, funding the Broadband DATA Act is vital to ensuring that all Americans are connected. With your leadership, we look forward to making that happen so that we can close the digital divide.

1 See, FY2021 Budget Request at pg. 31. Available at: https://www.fcc.gov/document/fy-2021-fcc-budget-estimate
Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Evan Viau or Kate O’Connor with the Minority Committee Staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,

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Greg Walden
Republican Leader
Committee on Energy and Commerce

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Robert E. Latta
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

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John Shimkus
Member of Congress

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Steve Scalise
Member of Congress

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Pete Olson
Member of Congress

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Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress

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Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

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Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

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Bill Flores
Member of Congress

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Susan W. Brooks
Member of Congress

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Tim Walberg
Member of Congress
Greg Gianforte
Member of Congress

cc: Frank Pallone, Jr., Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Michael F. Doyle, Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology