



March 31, 2022

The Honorable Michael Doyle
Chair
Subcommittee on
Communications and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Latta
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Communications and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Doyle and Ranking Member Latta:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce respectfully submits the following statement for the record for the House Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Communications and Technology hearing titled "Connecting America: Oversight of the FCC." We commend the Subcommittee for holding this important hearing regarding the Federal Communications Commission's ("FCC") responsibilities to oversee America's communications networks and ensure U.S. leadership in communications technologies.

Investing in Broadband Deployment

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress has established numerous programs across several federal agencies, including the FCC, to spur broadband deployment and affordability. In 2020, the Chamber released its [homework gap and broadband funding principles](#) focusing on technology neutrality, collocation, speed to market, and targeted and temporary programs. Consequently, we urge lawmakers to rigorously examine the impact of all federal broadband programs to ensure they can effectively close the digital divide and efficiently spend taxpayer resources. Moreover, we encourage Congress to take steps to provide for proper coordination, and if necessary, streamlining of federal broadband programs to minimize overbuilding and to focus on truly unserved areas.

Broadband Permitting Reform

While the Chamber supports federal investments in broadband, policymakers should not overlook barriers to broadband deployment, in particular permitting reform. Excessive and time-consuming permitting requirements can increase the cost of deployment as well as disincentivize private sector investment in broadband networks. The Chamber urges the FCC to use its existing authority to advance broadband

permitting. In addition, we call on Congress to advance permitting reform legislation to speed up broadband deployment.

Competition Policy

Private sector innovation has led to numerous advances in communications technologies and different types of broadband deployment options. This includes satellite and fixed-mobile broadband, which ultimately enhances market competition. Especially as the price of broadband is falling, the Chamber is concerned by initiatives such as the Executive Order (EO) 14036, “*Promoting Competition in the American Economy*” that encourages government interference in broadband markets without supporting evidence that competition is lacking and harming consumers. Finally, Congress should also discourage support for government-owned networks, considering these networks unfairly compete against private sector broadband networks.

Future of the Universal Service Fund

The Universal Service Fund (“USF”) faces serious financial challenges and requires fundamental reform to stabilize USF programs. The Chamber strongly believes that the most viable and effective long-term solution is to transition universal service programs into the Congressional appropriations process. This would ensure effective oversight of universal service programs and acknowledge that internet connectivity is essential to nearly every individual and business. As directed by Congress, the FCC is required to produce a report outlining reform options to the USF. We encourage the FCC to expeditiously meet this requirement and for Congress to make USF reform a priority moving forward.

Spectrum Allocation and Management

Spectrum is an essential resource for many crucial private sector activities including radio and television broadcasting, navigation, safety critical applications, wireless connectivity, and many others. As a scarce resource, the federal government is responsible for developing a comprehensive, unified, national spectrum management strategy that should be designed to efficiently utilize spectrum and enhance the availability and flexibility in licensing and the allocation of spectrum. The Chamber is pleased to have supported H.R. 2501, the Spectrum Coordination Act, and encourages the Committee to continue its oversight over spectrum allocation and management issues.

Conclusion

The United States has a unique opportunity to help close the digital divide and bring internet access to millions of Americans. The FCC will play a critical role necessary to achieve this objective. The Chamber looks forward to working with the FCC and Congress to effectively oversee America's communications networks and ensure U.S. leadership in communications technologies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TK' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Tom Quaadman
Executive Vice President
Chamber Technology Engagement Center
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology