



November 9, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the millions of Americans in rural areas struggling to stay connected during this extended period of remote work and distance learning, we write to urge Congress to appropriate \$65 million to modernize our outdated broadband coverage maps. The lasting impact of this investment will return multiples to American citizens in terms of economic productivity, job creation, and improved health, education, public safety and be a necessary tool to accelerate our recovery from COVID.

We recognize Congress has many competing and urgent priorities and we appreciate that under your leadership funding for broadband deployment continues to be a bipartisan priority for the Congress, especially during the COVID pandemic when Americans are relying on Internet connectivity more than ever before. There is bipartisan agreement that our current broadband mapping process is fundamentally flawed, seriously overstating coverage in rural census blocks and leaving too many Americans without access to the service they deserve. If we are going to make progress to close the digital divide, we need better, more granular and more accurate maps showing where broadband currently exists – and crucially, where it does not. This data will help policymakers and providers determine where crucial resources can be spent most efficiently and, in turn, connect the most Americans.

Earlier this year, Congress overwhelmingly passed, and the President signed, the bipartisan *Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) Act* to launch a 21st - century national broadband map with technology driven data collection. USTelecom members played a substantial a part in shaping this game-changing mapping plan, with their broadband fabric methodology serving as a core element of the final legislation.

All that remains is funding to complete the transformation of those maps and implement Congress' plan to distribute targeted broadband support to households most in need. The Federal Communications Commission, the House Energy & Commerce Committee, the Senate Commerce Committee and the Senate and House Appropriations Committees estimate it will cost \$65 million to complete the maps and have signaled their bipartisan support for this funding.

At a time when the American people are collectively relying on our communications infrastructure more than ever, and the indispensability of broadband to families, businesses, doctors and educators has never been more clear, investing in broadband mapping will yield significant returns and materially advance our national goal of universal connectivity.

Sincerely,

American Agri-Women
American Dairy Coalition
American Society of Agronomy
Crop Science Society of America
Intertribal Agriculture Council
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Soil Science Society of America
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
USTelecom – The Broadband Association
Women Involved in Farm Economics

Cc: The Honorable Richard Shelby
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Nita Lowey
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Roger Wicker
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Greg Walden