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The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
Chairman
Communications and Technology
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Doyle
Ranking Member
Communications and Technology
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blackburn and Ranking Member Doyle:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce applauds the Subcommittee for taking up the critical issue of ensuring access for all Americans to the internet at its hearing entitled “Closing the Digital Divide: Broadband Infrastructure Solutions.”

The Chamber created the Technology Engagement Center (C_TEC) to promote the role of technology in the economy and to advocate for rational policies that drive economic growth, spur innovation, and create jobs. C_TEC convenes a High Tech High Impact working group that demonstrates how technology addresses and solves everyday problems impacting Americans including those in the small business, rural health, and agricultural sectors.

In order to train America’s future workforce, technologies such as autonomous vehicles, unmanned aircraft, and smart cities must become a reality. High-speed broadband deployment will be critical as we expand the adoption of advanced technology to rural, tribal, and underprivileged Americans.

High-speed broadband powered in part by 5G will be an economic game changer for the American economy. As Federal Communications Commissioner Brendan Carr recently remarked at the Chamber, “if we get the right policies in place, 5G could mean \$275 billion in network investments, three million new jobs, and a half a trillion dollars added to the GDP.”¹

Additionally, rural telehealth is expected to generate tremendous savings for Americans with regard to lost wages, hospital costs, and travel expenses.²

¹ Remarks of Commissioner Brendan Carr at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Telecommunications & E-Commerce Committee, Washington, D.C. at 2 (January 25, 2018) *available at* https://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2018/db0125/DOC-348866A1.pdf.

² NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, “Anticipating Economic Returns of Rural Telehealth,” (Mar. 2017) *available at* https://www.ntca.org/sites/default/files/documents/2017-12/SRC_whitepaper_anticipatingeconomicreturns.pdf.

Evidence is also mounting that internet connectivity is becoming increasingly necessary for entrepreneurs in today's economy to compete. C_TEC found that 84% of small businesses are using at least one digital platform to provide information to customers.³

Unfortunately, millions of Americans still do not have access to high-speed internet. Although a lack of funding in high-cost areas is part of the problem, many archaic siting rules on the federal, state, and local levels hinder the ability of internet and other wireless providers to expand service.

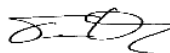
For example, localities are still charging providers revenue-based fees designed for larger cell towers to site small cells—which are about the size of a pizza box—on public rights of way. These types of fee structures exacerbate the high cost of deployment given the large number of small cells required to power 5G technologies and can be cost-prohibitive.⁴

Such innovation-stifling siting rules do not only affect the wireless industry. Local governments have charged cable operators duplicative siting fees, which are not based on costs, to install broadband in the same place that cable lines already exist.⁵

C_TEC believes that now is the time for Congress to step in to alleviate the permitting and other siting burdens, which are getting in the way of deploying broadband necessary to rural, tribal, and other underserved Americans.

While some laws like FAST-41⁶ enable federal permit streamlining of some broadband projects, much more is needed to ensure the economically-vital deployment of internet service to all Americans. C_TEC looks forward to working with you on advancing legislation to expand broadband service that would power the technology that has a high impact on our economy and jobs.

Sincerely,



Tim Day
Senior Vice President
C_TEC U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

³ “Examining the Impact of Technology on Small Business,” How Small Businesses Use Social Media and Digital Platforms to Grow, Sell, and Hire at 6 (Jan. 18, 2018) available at https://www.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/ctec_sme-rpt_v3.pdf.

⁴ Petition for Declaratory Ruling, *In the Matter of Promoting Broadband for All Americans by Prohibiting Excessive Charges for Access to Public Rights of Way* (Nov. 15, 2016) available at <https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/122306218885/mobilitie.pdf>.

⁵ *City of Eugene v. Comcast of Oregon*, 359 Ore. 528 (2016).

⁶ See 47 U.S.C. § 4370m