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Received & Inspected

United States Senate

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The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

Thank you for all the work you have done during your first year as chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Coming from rural states, we both know the importance of our local broadband providers to providing quality broadband connections in Montana and across the nation. That is why it is important that programs at the FCC, which help our local providers, are properly funded.

For these reasons, I urge you to fully fund the Alternative-Connect America Model (A-CAM) portion of the universal service fund high-cost program before the end of the year so that more Montanans can receive access to broadband.

On October 31, I signed a bipartisan letter urging the FCC to take steps to address the USF budget shortfall so we can achieve our shared national broadband goals and close the digital divide. Fully funding the A-CAM is an important step towards achieving these goals. In addition, I urge you to move forward with evaluating the universal service fund high-cost program rules for rural broadband providers that are not participating in the A-CAM plan.

Thank you for your consideration in addressing this important issue.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES  
United States Senator



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

February 13, 2018

The Honorable Steve Daines  
United States Senate  
320 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Daines:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of connecting additional rural consumers in Montana to high-speed broadband. Your views are very important and will be entered into the record of our proceeding on the Connect America Fund and considered as part of the Commission's review.

In my first remarks to FCC staff as Chairman, I declared that my highest priority would be making sure every American who wants high-speed Internet access can get it. Rural Americans deserve the same digital access as those living in urban areas. A key way to reach this goal is by updating the high-cost universal service program to encourage cooperatives and other small, rural carriers to build more online infrastructure.

We need more deployment in sparsely populated rural areas if we're going to extend digital opportunity to all Americans. But I've heard from community leaders, Congress, and carriers that insufficient, unpredictable funding has kept them from reaching this goal. That is why I recently shared with my fellow commissioners an order that would promote more high-speed broadband deployment in rural areas. If adopted, it would provide over \$500 million in additional funding for cooperatives and small rural carriers—including those participating in the Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM) plan. And it seeks public input on both further increasing support to current A-CAM recipients and on giving legacy rate-of-return carriers a new chance to elect model-based support. Increased funding will boost broadband deployment in rural America, and the accompanying reforms will put our high-cost system on a more efficient path, helping to ensure that every American can benefit from the digital revolution.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is stylized with a large "A" and a long, sweeping "Pai".

Ajit V. Pai