



April 15, 2018  
Marlene H. Dortch,  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Room TW-A325  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
**RE: Promoting Telehealth and Telemedicine in Rural America, WC Docket No. 17-310**

Dear Ms. Dortch,

I write in support of the Emergency Waiver Petition filed by the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition on April 3, 2018. This Petition asks the FCC to waive Section 54.675(a) of its Rules and fully fund qualified applications for Rural Health Care (RHC) funding until the Commission completes the open rulemaking. Docket No. 17-310.

The RHC program funding cuts of 15 to 25 percent were much larger than anticipated and are effectively retroactive because they were not announced by USAC until more than eight months after the start of the funding year, much later than was reasonable or reasonably expected. As a result, health care providers across the nation that entered into contracts for eligible services effective at the start of FY 2017 (July 1, 2017) face immediate and significant financial hardship.

Central Peninsula Hospital provides: cancer treatment, emergency services, general surgery, orthopedics, podiatry, urology, family practice, internal medicine, neurology, mental health, radiology, pediatrics, in addition to other services and some provided through partnerships like cardiology and spine surgery. Two critical services are provided by telemedicine and they are eICU, and Telestroke.

We recently moved our electronic medical record to be hosted in Anchorage, so our telecommunications services heavily funded by USAC are now critical to our business more than ever before. Now in addition to Telestroke which provides timely diagnosis of stroke victims for life safety, we also use electronic intensive care services so physicians can monitor and treat patients remotely in our ICU. The decrease in funding by USAC and the FCC will greatly impact the viability of our organization and cripple our ability to provide services to our community.

Thank you for carefully considering our support of SHLB's emergency petition. While we hope long-term solutions to improve the Rural Health Care Program come from the open rulemaking docket, we must also urge the Commission to act to alleviate the more immediate problems being caused by the recent funding delays and shortages.

*CPH is a  
member of  
the Planetree  
Alliance.*



Sincerely,  
Bob Wattam

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Wattam J.". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a distinct "J" at the end.

Information Services Director  
Central Peninsula Hospital

CC:  
The Honorable Senator Murkowski  
The Honorable Senator Sullivan  
The Honorable Congressman Young

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member of  
the Planetree  
Alliance.*