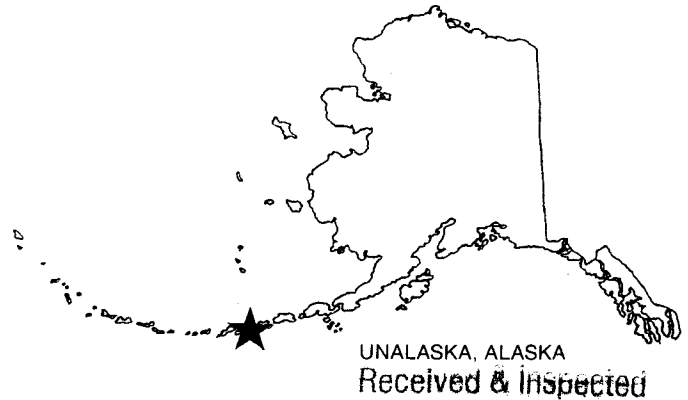


# CITY OF UNALASKA

P.O. BOX 610  
UNALASKA, ALASKA 99685-0610  
(907) 581-1251 FAX (907) 581-1417

April 26, 2018



Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

MAY 10 2018

FCC Mailroom

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

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 starting with Funding Year 2017, until the Commission completes the open rulemaking in WC 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.

Unalaska (also known as Dutch Harbor) is a community of 4,700 year round residents located in the Aleutian Islands, approximately 800 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska. That's 2 ¼ hours flying time from Anchorage. We are also the largest fishing port by volume of our products, and 4<sup>th</sup> by overall dollar value in the United States. Our community grows to up to 8,000 people twice per year during the main fishing seasons in the Bering Sea. Also, as you might imagine, the seafood plants here that process those large volumes cause Unalaska to become a very industrial place, making good quality health care critically important.

Unalaska has a health clinic here called Iliuliuk Family and Health Services who relies on the funding from the Federal Government whom you may have heard from. Changes to the funding could greatly impact the quality of health care available to the residents and itinerant workers here in Unalaska. As the local government striving to continue to improve the quality of life in our community we want to make sure you hear our voice asking that the funding levels not be cut back so that we can continue to have a good, safe environment for all of our residents. I mentioned our distance from Anchorage in the previous paragraph so you will know the distance to fully staffed and equipped hospitals, and therefore the time a medevac service can take to get a critically ill or injured patient to those facilities. These funds in question can really make the difference between life and death for our residents and workers.

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Federal Communications Commission

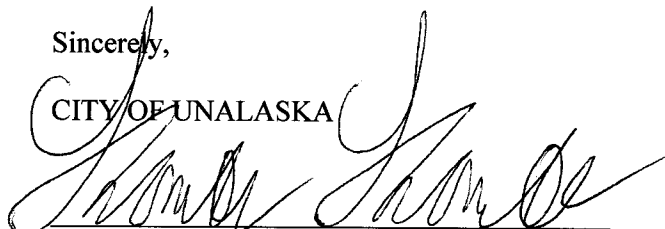
April 26, 2018

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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.

Sincerely,

CITY OF UNALASKA



Thomas Thomas  
City Manager  
43 Raven Way; P.O. Box 610  
Unalaska, Alaska 99685  
(907) 581-1602



Enclosures

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