

March 29, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
The Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

I applaud the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) for answering my call and moving forward with Mobility Fund II by releasing the Initial Eligible Areas Map. While I am encouraged by the progress being made, I also understand that we have one chance to get this right. I therefore urge you to reach out to state and local governments to ensure that they are aware of this program and have your full support throughout the challenge process.

The \$4.53 billion this program will bring to high-cost, hard-to-service areas is absolutely critical for rural areas in my state that are struggling to compete in the digital age. While I am aware that the map released by the Commission is only the "initial" map – and I appreciate your explicit clarification in the order that all State, Local, and Tribal Governmental entities are eligible to submit challenges to the Commission for areas they believe have been incorrectly determined to have adequate service – many of our state and local partners are already stretched thin and simply do not have the resources to navigate this process alone.

I request your help in notifying these governmental entities of this opportunity, supporting them through the challenge process, and minimizing any cost burdens that may be associated with it. Submitting a challenge to the Commission should not be a daunting or burdensome task for local governments whose only interest is a desire to improve the quality of life for the people they represent. With increased collaboration between states, local government, and the Commission, I believe that more of these institutions will choose to participate in the challenge process and bring us one step closer to closing the digital divide in this country.

Mobility Fund II has the opportunity to significantly help level the playing field between rural and urban areas, allowing states like mine to compete in a 21st century economy. Ensuring the eligible areas map reflects the real world experience of real people is essential to the success of this program. I thank you for all of your efforts to get this program where it is today, and I look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that this funding goes to the places that need it the most.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 16, 2018

The Honorable Joe Manchin
United States Senate
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Manchin:

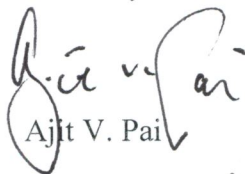
Thank you for your letter regarding the participation of state and local entities in the Mobility Fund II challenge process. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the steps the Commission is taking to engage state and local entities in the challenge process.

Commission staff have conducted extensive outreach to governmental entities to make them aware of their opportunity to participate in the challenge process. In coordination with our Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Commission staff held a webinar on the challenge process for state, local, and tribal government entities on May 3, 2018. Commission staff will provide a free presentation on the challenge process on May 18, 2018 in South Charleston, West Virginia. Similar live, in-person outreach events have occurred in or are planned for New Mexico, Kansas, Maine, Washington, New Hampshire, and Mississippi. Additionally, Commission staff have been regularly interacting with state and local officials to support their involvement in the challenge process, promptly providing login credentials to governmental entities that have requested access to the challenge portal and answering questions on an ongoing basis.

The Commission has also taken concrete steps to reduce the burden on governmental entities that may be interested in submitting challenges. The Commission released a second map indicating areas that are not eligible because only one unsubsidized carrier claims to provide the requisite level of service. These are areas that are most likely to be successfully challenged, which means that this map enables governmental entities to more efficiently target areas ripe for challenge. In addition, the Commission increased the speed test buffer radius, effectively reducing the number of speed tests required for a successful challenge.

Like you, the Commission is focused on ensuring that our limited universal service funds are effectively and accurately targeted to areas that lack unsubsidized 4G LTE service. This is a vital part of our strategy toward closing the wireless dimension of the digital divide. I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,


Ajit V. Pai

P. S. Senator, thanks to you and Wes for working with us on these issues.