

June 6, 2018



Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Promoting Telehealth in Rural America*, WC Docket No. 17-310

Dear Chairman Pai,

Thank you for your leadership at the FCC and for proposing a significant funding increase for the Rural Health Care Program that, upon adoption, would immediately address the funding shortfall and help improve telemedicine in rural Alaska and across the country.

As you noted, recent increases in funding needs under the Rural Health Care Program have outpaced the program's static \$400 million annual funding cap, originally set in 1997. The shortfall has created uncertainty for patients, health care providers and communications service providers alike.

Your order would increase the cap to \$571 million for the current funding year to immediately address a critical funding crisis and enable rural health care providers to continue offering telemedicine services. The order would give providers long-term certainty by adjusting the cap annually for inflation and allowing unused funds from prior years to be carried forward to future years.

Thank you for understanding and supporting the critical role broadband plays in giving patients in rural areas access to high-quality health care services. Your plan to increase funding for the FCC's Rural Health Care Program is an important step that will help health care providers get the connectivity they need to better serve patients throughout rural America, and more so in Alaska given the extreme conditions of distance and isolation that our State's rural communities face.

We applaud your support of improving access to and quality of health care through telemedicine in Alaska and more broadly in rural America. We hope your colleagues will support your plan without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anand Vadapalli'.

Anand Vadapalli
President & CEO

CC:

Commissioner O'Rielly
Commissioner Carr
Commissioner Rosenworcel