



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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June 12, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington DC 20554

Re: In the Matter of Connect USVI Fund, WC Docket No. 18-143

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the newly sworn in Governor of the US Virgin Islands, I write to share my views in the above captioned matter. It is imperative that we secure US Government assistance, to restore and upgrade telecommunications facilities in the USVI. With the assistance of our federal partners, all of our citizens will have access to state of the art 21st century communications networks that are critical to the Territory. I urge you to complete action on the Connect USVI Fund as quickly as possible.

As you know, Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017 continue to have a devastating impact on the overall economy of our islands and our telecommunications services are no exception. I am extremely grateful for the FCC's prompt action in the days and weeks immediately following the disaster. These efforts helped restore our vital communications networks. However, as the FCC has acknowledged with the proposed Connect USVI Fund, the continuation of meaningful support is essential to ensure that telecommunications and internet access remain affordable. We must also continue to expand in this rural and challenging area of the U.S., contributing to the USVI's full economic recovery.

The Connect USVI Fund is an opportunity to build on the historic Universal Service Fund support to the Virgin Islands and promote the development of telecommunications infrastructure that will give our citizens access to the advanced networks those living on the mainland take for granted.

It is critical to this goal that the full amount proposed for the USVI Connect Fund is committed to the Territory for the full ten-year term. As your visit to the Territory demonstrated, telecommunications services comparable to the mainland are particularly costly to construct and

maintain while ensuring that service remains affordable. The availability of these services supports and stimulates economic recovery critical to rebuilding after the hurricanes but also improves the Virgin Islands economy overall. As a result, at a minimum, the full amount proposed, over \$18 million per year for 10 years, must be committed to the Territory. In no event should the current level of support, over \$16 million per year, be reduced or the Territory risks a substantial decline in its progress.

To ensure that these financial resources are used most effectively, the FCC should mandate that the USVI Connect Fund supports investment in infrastructure that rapidly increases access to broadband service with speeds that will provide the capacity to support the needs of the island. I believe this would best be accomplished by establishing a minimum service standard and capability for receipt of the funding. To that end, funding should be allocated to ensure that there will be Territory-wide broadband service with a minimum speed of 25 Mbps down/3 Mbps up. Support for services that do not meet the FCC's national standard for broadband service will be a wasted opportunity and could adversely affect the telecommunications advancements already achieved.

Furthermore, the FCC must ensure that the entity that receives this support begins construction expeditiously and is fully positioned to meet an aggressive completion schedule. A substantial value should be placed on any plan that would achieve the service standards identified above within two years or less. The hardship USVI residents have endured in the eighteen months since the hurricanes struck must not be compounded by avoidable delays in deployment of advanced telecommunications infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman, the USVI Connect Fund is a unique opportunity to ensure that the telecommunications services of the US Virgin Islands are comparable in quality, availability and price as those on the mainland, while also supporting a path for further improvement. Executed properly, it would serve to improve resilience in services in the decade to come.

I remain buoyed and encouraged by the FCC's quick action immediately after the hurricanes and your subsequent visit demonstrate to our residents that our Territory is of significant importance to the FCC. We are grateful for your consideration of supporting our recovery while at same time allocating resources that will enable us to meet 21st century technological advancements in the telecommunications and broadband industry.

I remain confident that you will ensure that these funds are allocated in their entirety and directed in a manner that will provide maximum benefits to the USVI. I thank you for your continued support and look forward to a positive outcome.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Albert Bryan Jr.', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Albert Bryan Jr.
Governor, United States Virgin Islands