

July 28, 2017

Chairman Ajit Pai
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Chairman Pai, Commissioner Clyburn, and Commissioner O'Rielly:

I want to thank you for your continued hard work to expand broadband access, specifically in rural areas. Broadband removes geography as a barrier, connecting rural populations to more services and information. Teachers in small towns can now access more educational materials, farmers can better plan for future weather and market events, and rural hospitals can connect to patients in new ways. However, there are still many steps we need to take before rural America can truly be considered 'connected.'

In light of this, I would like to bring your attention to a letter I sent to the Commission on December 18, 2015, and the response received from then-Chairman Wheeler on March 1, 2016. In my letter I highlighted how important broadband is to the delivery of modern healthcare and the important role telemedicine plays in expanding access to affordable healthcare in rural Montana. I also noted that the current Universal Service programs do not support internal connections in healthcare institutions. Internal wireless connections help expand options for rural care providers and for the patients they serve.

It is my understanding from former Chairman Wheeler and from recent actions at the Commission that there are ongoing petitions and rulemakings that could address the concerns laid out in this and my previous letter. If current proceedings do have the ability to examine or incorporate a rule change, I would request an update on their status. If, on the other hand, there are no current proceedings, I would encourage the current Commission to initiate a proceeding to examine a rule change to add wireless internal connections as an option of the Universal Service rural healthcare program. I maintain that a small change in the Commission's rules can make a big difference in rural America.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

September 13, 2017

The Honorable Steve Daines
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Daines:

Thank you for your most recent letter discussing the importance of the Commission's Rural Healthcare (RHC) Program and following up on a previous letter.

As the son of two doctors in rural Kansas, I understand how connectivity can play a transformative role in the provision of medical care. I recall my father driving many miles at times to see patients. Having seen today how telemedicine is being used to improve the well-being of rural Americans, I support the RHC program. As Chairman, I will work to ensure it efficiently provides needed connectivity to rural health care providers.

Your letter references a previous response regarding the RHC program from former Chairman Wheeler and asks about the possibility of supporting wireless internal connections. That response cited a Petition for Rulemaking filed by the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) and six statewide and regional telehealth networks, including the Health Information Exchange of Montana. The Petition proposed a series of modifications to the RHC Program. While the issue of funding for internal connections was not raised in the record stemming from the petition for rulemaking referenced in former Chairman Wheeler's letter, please be assured that we will bear your points in mind as we assess how to proceed going forward with the RHC Program.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai".

Ajit V. Pai