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March 14, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W., Room TW-B204
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Reply to Comments by Buckeye Hills Regional Council Regarding the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund WC Docket Nos. 19-126 and 10-90

Madam Secretary:

This letter is prepared in reply to comments submitted by the Buckeye Hills Regional Council on September 19, 2019, and reflects the position of Appalachian Partnership, Inc. (API) on the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund WC Docket Nos. 19-126 and 10-90.

Appalachian Partnership, Inc. and its corporate affiliates Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth, LLC (APEG) and Appalachian Growth Capital, LLC (AGC) share a joint mission of building enduring, widely-shared economic prosperity across Appalachian Ohio. API's roles within that larger mission are threefold: 1) to provide a business voice for improving prosperity of the region and 2) to attract and deploy resources from untapped or underutilized sources to advance the region's prosperity, and 3) to provide an administrative back-office infrastructure to provide its corporate affiliates and other partners a cost-effective support structure for their efforts to advance regional prosperity.

In conjunction with its APEG affiliate, in early 2019 API completed a highly participatory regional prosperity planning process. That process involved 450 people including 197 business leaders in one or more of 36 public-facing focus-groups and planning sessions. Addressing critical gaps in broadband access across the region was one of three issues identified in every public-input session for the planning process. Availability of skilled workforce and addressing gaps in availability of infrastructure to support business success were the other two issues, and broadband deployment is a critical constraint to both. Broadband is required for students to prepare for 21st century workforce participation as well as for retraining displaced and incumbent workers. It is also essential infrastructure for the success of the region's businesses.

One outcome of the prosperity planning process was creation of a regional working-group to address the plan's strategies related to broadband deployment. Buckeye Hills Regional Council (BHRC) has assumed a co-leadership role with API and APEG for that group, and their research and analysis has been critical to the group's efforts. As a result of these efforts, we are intimately familiar with BHRC's comments on the referenced Dockets and the underlying research.

Appalachian Partnership Inc. is wholly supportive of and fully endorses the comments and recommendations made by BHRC. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about this endorsement.

Sincerely,

John A. Molinaro
President and CEO