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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–5400

COMMITTEES:
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NATURAL RESOURCES

April 1, 2015

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I write to express concern regarding the Federal Communications Commission's plan to close 16 of its 24 field offices throughout the United States, including its office in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to which two full-time employees are currently assigned. While I recognize that the FCC is attempting to achieve budget savings through this plan, I respectfully submit that closure of the San Juan field office will have a meaningful adverse impact on the FCC mission in Puerto Rico. I urge the FCC to reconsider this plan and to consider alternatives that will maintain an FCC presence on the island.

I understand that the San Juan field office provides a number of important services, including on-scene investigations of incidents in which radio, television, wire, satellite or cable services are compromised; inspections and audits; public safety response; and investigation and resolution of interference issues.

Puerto Rico is a radio frequency-dense environment and the various broadcasters on the island rely on the San Juan field office to enforce the agency's standards and regulations, which exist to ensure that legitimate and licensed actors have access to the radio frequencies that they need to conduct business without undue interference. I am concerned that closure of the San Juan field office could cause delays in the FCC's provision of these vital services.

Specifically, in your March 24, 2015 testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations, you stated that the FCC will compensate for the closure of two-thirds of its field offices by using a "more mobile, technology enabled deployment model" in which so-called "tiger teams" would deploy from the nearest FCC regional office. You further stated that you did not foresee any decrease in productivity or in mission effectiveness as a result of this proposed change.

The closest FCC regional office to Puerto Rico is located in Miami, Florida—over 1,000 miles from the island. Deploying FCC employees from Miami to Puerto Rico via commercial air will be time-consuming and logistically difficult, and will be particularly problematic in the event of an emergency that requires immediate attention. The travel and lodging involved will cost money. Once in Puerto Rico, FCC officials would have to access a vehicle with mobile

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equipment and drive to the location where enforcement action is required. All of this will reduce savings otherwise realized from closure of the San Juan field office. More importantly, it will reduce the FCC's ability to carry out its mission in a timely and effective manner.

I am also concerned that FCC officials deployed from Miami to Puerto Rico may not be as familiar with Puerto Rico's unique geography and topography, its particular industry structure, and other pertinent challenges as are the current full-time FCC staff in the San Juan field office.

Finally, I have concerns about the potential impact that closure of the San Juan field office would have on federal, state and local law enforcement, along with first responders, whose communications systems depend on FCC-regulated technologies.

In light of the foregoing, I would like to request a briefing from the FCC on this issue as soon as possible. At the briefing, I would like the FCC to explain whether it has considered budget-saving alternatives that would enable the FCC to maintain a field office or other FCC presence on the island. For example, I would like to know whether the FCC has studied the possibility of instituting a telework program that would enable the two employees currently assigned to the San Juan field office to work from home. This would allow the agency to maintain skilled and experienced employees on the ground in Puerto Rico, where they could respond rapidly and without associated travel and lodging costs—in contrast to FCC employees deployed to Puerto Rico from Miami.

I look forward to receiving a briefing on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress