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Laurel Health System
15 Meade Street
Wellsboro, Pennsylvania 16901-1813

July 21, 1998

CC: 96-45

The Honorable William E. Kennard, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M St. N.W., Room 222
Washington, DC 20544
Attn: Commission Secretary Magalie Roman Salas

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Dear Chairman Kennard and Secretary Salas:

I have recently learned of the Federal Communication Commissions' USAC Plan of Reorganization, combining the Rural Health Care Corporation, the Schools and Libraries Corporation and the Universal Service Administrative Company into one entity. As a rural health care provider, I have serious concerns about the structure of the USAC and its ability to adequately represent the telehealth needs of rural and frontier health care providers.

Specifically, the new USAC board will have only one rural health care expert addressing the needs of a vast geographic and diverse portion of the United States. I urge you to increase rural health care representation on the USAC board to at least match the number of representatives from other constituencies, such as schools and libraries.

In addition, while the new board would have a Rural Health Care Advisory Committee, it is my understanding that committee will have only one representative with experience in and knowledge of rural and frontier health care issues. Such an advisory committee will serve the USAC board—and the rural health care community—better if all seven members have such experience. By changing the structure of the committee to allow non-USAAC board members to participate, the FCC can ensure the concerns of millions of people living in rural and frontier areas are heard.

I commend the FCC for taking the issue of telehealth seriously. It offers great promise as a tool for rural and frontier health care providers to link with colleagues and specialists in other areas, and it will enhance the ability of providers to stay abreast of the latest developments and techniques in health care delivery. Because the interests of rural health care providers are so unique, however, it is important that we be fully represented by parties with intimate knowledge of the challenges of providing rural health care.

Sincerely,

Ron Butler
CEO and President

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