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March 30, 2011

Sharon Gillet, Chief
Wireline Competition Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 02-60; Request for Additional Pilot Program Funding

Dear Ms. Gillet:

I am writing on behalf of the California State Rural Health Association (CSRHA), our Board of Directors and the 5 million rural California residents to support the California Telehealth Network's (CTN) request for additional Rural Health Care Pilot Program (RHCPP) funding.

CSRHA has had a long-standing relationship with CTN since their initial creation and both our Board President and Interim-Executive Director hold seats on their Board of Directors. It is very important to CSRHA, our members, the rural California community at-large and the 800 more than eligible healthcare provider sites that CTN has the ability and resources to connect with their broadband network to link underserved rural communities dedicated to healthcare. Rural communities suffer from a variety of health disparities in California. The CTN will allow our most remote frontier and rural communities to have access to healthcare that they would otherwise not have. Telehealth provides a cost-effective solution for access to care and providing rural communities access to specialty care. Telehealth eliminates the distance barrier between patients and their providers.

CTN is requesting \$90.9 million additional Pilot Project funding to be extended over an eight year period, through 2019. The additional funding would allow CTN to achieve the following:

- Allow existing CTN members to extend the 85% Pilot Program subsidy for their monthly recurring costs for three additional years (2014-2017) at cost of approximately \$15.6 million per year for a total of \$47 million. This will allow members to increase their dollars spent on patient care and solidify their commitment to CTN.





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- Allow CTN to add an additional 1100 eligible healthcare providers at a cost of \$13.9 million per year for three years (2014-2017) for a total of \$41.8 million. Providing additional funding for additional provider members is crucial for the success of the rural healthcare safety-net and eliminating the disparity gap.
- Construct a redundant connection at the CENIC Point of Presence in Sacramento, CA, at a cost of approximately \$100,000 per year for a total of \$600,000.
- Allow CTN to connect to other Rural Health Care Pilot Programs and state telehealth networks such as Oregon Health Network, Colorado, and Southwest Telehealth Access Grid.

The California State Rural Health Association is in complete support of CTN's plan for the \$90.9 million in requested funds. We request that if WCD grants this request, CTN be permitted time to secure the 15% match for the newly available funds and an additional five years to expand any newly committed funds.

Thank you for your time considering this request. If you have any questions I may be contacted at 916-453-0780 or nickergw@ah.org.

Sincerely,

Gail Nickerson
Interim Executive Director
California State Rural Health Association

Earl W. Ferguson, MD, PhD
President
California State Rural Health Association

