



April 16, 2012

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **WC Docket No. 02-60**
DA 12-273

Dear Ms. Dortch:

As a current active participant in the Rural Health Care Pilot Program ("RHCPP"), the Heartland Unified Broadband Network ("HUBNet") is responding to Public Notice DA 12-273, wherein the Wireline Competition Bureau seeks comment on a funding proposal to aid funding RHCPP participants in "transitioning out" of the RHCPP.

HUBNet currently has 64 Health Care Providers ("HCPs") in South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska, all "rural," being supported by the RHCPP, funding for which support will be exhausted within funding year 2012. Providing the additional funding to extend support for those HCPs for the entire funding year 2012 would significantly help ease the transition of those circuits to the permanent Rural Health Care support program or other support mechanisms that may become available. HUBNet strongly recommends and supports the implementation of the 'bridge' funding program proposed in DA 12-273, using uncommitted RHCPP funds to maintain current support levels for existing HCP connections for the entire funding year 2012.

The HUBNet consortium appreciates the Federal Communications Commission's planning for the 'bridging' of the funding gap between the RHCPP and the permanent Rural Health Care support program. We believe that the RHCPP has had a significant positive impact on the rural HCPs served by HUBNet, and has allowed the consortium to provide services which would otherwise be unavailable due to the cost of the wide-area network links needed for such delivery. We encourage the Commission to consider the RHCPP as a successful 'pilot' of the funding mechanism and to move to create a permanent funding program using the RHCPP as a model.

Sincerely,

James T. Veline
Project Coordinator
Heartland Unified Broadband Network
Senior Vice President / CIO
Avera Health