



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Rural Health and Community Care**

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Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor  
Albert A. Delia, Acting Secretary

John W. Price, Director

July 9, 2012

Mr. Julius Genachowski, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington DC 20544

Room: 8-B201  
Phone: 202-418-1000  
Email via: <http://transition.fcc.gov/commissioners/genachowski/mail.html>

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

This expresses a concern about the timely completion of the reform effort for the FCC's Rural Healthcare Program (RHC). North Carolina is a participant in the Rural Healthcare Pilot Projects (RHCPP), called the North Carolina TeleHealth Network (NCTN). The NCTN project has been very successful in bringing a new generation of highly reliable and high speed broadband services to NC's public and non-profit providers by leveraging the discount funds available in the RHCPP.

Currently, NCTN has 82 sites, with 25 others under development for service under RHCPP. These sites will make use of all of the \$12.1M in RHCPP discounts available to the NCTN. Once the RHC is reformed, 150 specifically identified safety net sites are hoping to receive discounted service. Of these, 24 are small, state-supported rural health centers that operate on a "shoestring" budget. Along with 125 Federally Qualified Health Center sites, these safety net providers are in need of the reform to assure affordable broadband rates and connection to the health information exchange.

We were excited to see the reform of RHC taking the key step of issuing a proposed rule as a means of reaching many of our small safety net providers. Those reforms, proposed for RHC in mid 2010, are essential to North Carolina's ability to make wide use of the program. A final rule was expected within a year after the proposed rule. To date, a final rule has not been issued. As a result, we are approaching a point where we have concerns about mounting a timely program to extend discounted service to those sites already subscribed to the NCTN and to assist those sites that were not included in RHCPP discounts.

The RHCPP has been invaluable in NC, and we hope to continue and enlarge the network with a timely reformed RHC. Please, let me know what steps are expected for rule finalization and when these will occur. For further discussion, please feel free to contact Dave Kirby, NCTN program manager, at [Dave@KirbyIMC.com](mailto:Dave@KirbyIMC.com) or (919-272-1157).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John W. Price in blue ink.  
John W. Price