

January 27, 2014

Ex Parte Notice
VIA ECFS

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

Re: High-Cost Universal Service Support, WC Docket No. 05-337; AT&T Petition to Launch a Proceeding Concerning the TDM-to-IP Transition, GN Docket No. 12-353; Technology Transitions Policy Task Force, GN Docket No. 13-5; In the matter of a National Broadband Plan for Our Future, GN Docket No. 09-51; Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, GN Docket No. 12-228

Dear Ms. Dortch,

On January 23, 2014 Edyael Casaperalta of the Center for Rural Strategies and representing the members of the Rural Broadband Policy Group (“RBPG”) met with Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) officials Gigi Sohn, Special Counsel for External Affairs to Chairman Wheeler; Carol Matthey from the Wireline Competition Bureau and the Technology Transitions Task Force; and Jonathan Chambers from the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis.

Ms. Casaperalta advocated for maintaining consumer protections that have allowed access to affordable and reliable basic telephone service in rural communities and for extending these consumer protections to Voice Over Internet Protocol and wireless services. She described the challenges rural Americans face in accessing wireless and broadband services and shared a compilation of testimonies from rural consumers.

Ms. Casaperalta expressed concern with ensuring public safety and closing the digital divide if consumer protections currently enforced on telephone services are not transferred over to IP networks and services. Finally, she informed FCC officials of bills that seek to deregulate basic telephone service and IP services at the state level and threaten the loss of affordable, reliable, and comparable communications services in rural communities. She encouraged the FCC to act with all its authority to implement strong consumer protections at the federal level that protect rural consumers from the effects of deregulation at the state level.

Ms. Matthey and Mr. Chambers informed Ms. Casaperalta of the upcoming Rural Trials program seeking proposals from non-Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers such as co-ops, municipalities, and non-profits, to provide high-speed Internet service in unserved and underserved rural areas.

Ms. Casaperalta agreed to organize a call between FCC officials and rural stakeholders to discuss the program and provide feedback.

Ms. Casaperalta shared the attached handouts with the FCC officials present at the meeting. In sum, these handouts support: federal consumer protections that increase access to reliable, affordable telephone, wireless and IP services; making funds available to non-eligible telecommunications carriers; and open Internet principles.

The RBPG is a national coalition of rural broadband advocates with two goals: 1) to articulate broadband policies that create opportunities for rural communities to participate fully in the nation's democracy, economy, culture, and society, and 2) to encourage national collaboration among rural advocates for fast, affordable, and reliable telecommunications services.

Respectfully submitted,



Edyael Casaperalta
Rural Broadband Policy Group Coordinator
Center for Rural Strategies
606.632.3244
edyael@ruralstrategies.org