

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 20, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to urge you to take action to restore sufficient funding and predictability to the Universal Service Fund's (USF) High-Cost program budget before the end of the year. This critical program helps ensure that rural Minnesotans and others in rural areas across the country have access to high quality broadband and voice services comparable to those available in urban areas, but current budget shortfalls threaten its impact and effectiveness.

We appreciate the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) recent Order committing additional funds to support carriers that rely on the USF High-Cost program to serve rural consumers. While this action provided valuable support, there is still an immediate need for a budget that provides long-term, sufficient and predictable funding to smaller rural carriers.

The current High-Cost program budget shortfalls are preventing new broadband deployments to the millions of rural Americans that currently lack access. In Minnesota, the insufficient budget is estimated to cut support that carriers would otherwise have received by more than \$7,648,424 over a twelve-month period. These reductions in support will require providers to postpone or even cancel broadband investments, reducing the availability and increasing the cost of broadband in rural areas.

If the current budget shortfall is not immediately addressed, we risk limiting an effective tool to close the digital divide. We appreciate your commitment at the August 16 Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation FCC oversight hearing to address the High-Cost budget before the end of the year and we urge you to work with your fellow commissioners to ensure this deadline is met.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Collin Peterson
United States Representative



Richard M. Nolan
United States Representative