



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harris:

This letter is sent on behalf of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association in response to your March 13 letter regarding the importance of certain critical services in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. We thank you for writing to us to raise this important issue, and I am proud to report back with respect to the commitment of NTCA’s members to help sustain critical connectivity in rural America during this difficult time.

As background, NTCA represents nearly 850 small cooperative and independently owned providers of reliable and robust voice and broadband services in the most rural reaches of our nation, serving less than 5% of the U.S. population across approximately 35% of the U.S. landmass. Notwithstanding these significant challenges of distance and density, these small hometown providers have deployed advanced networks across their serving area; more than 60% of their rural customers currently have direct access to fiber connections. Moreover, we often like to highlight how important their local presence is, as “customer service” for NTCA members often means of hearing about customer concerns directly and personally in the supermarket, at church, or in the school parking lot.

NTCA and its members share your view that one of the most critical things we can do now to mitigate transmission of the coronavirus is to enable social distancing. We also recognize that this underscores the importance of access to broadband to be able to work and/or study from home – robust services that enable fully interactive experiences will become increasingly important as data move from the office to the home and as education moves from the classroom to online environments. To this end, because they have already made significant investments in robust networks, NTCA members believe they are as well-positioned as any provider in rural or urban America to help ensure students can participate in distance learning and that workers can perform their jobs from home. In addition, to the extent that their customers – who, in most cases, are also their neighbors – suffer economically from the coronavirus, NTCA’s members have committed to work with those customers to help keep them connected. Indeed, numerous NTCA members have expressly committed to FCC Chairman Pai’s “Keep Americans Connected” pledge, and a number of members are doing even more to bring online those customers who are not yet subscribing to broadband in order to enable effective social distancing.

The Honorable Kamala Harris

March 18, 2020

Page 2 of 2

At this difficult time, NTCA and its members are firmly committed to working with their customers, other operators, and policymakers as part of a collaborative effort to help America's response to the coronavirus crisis and to ensure that the mission of universal service in rural America continues to be realized and furthered.

Sincerely,



Shirley Bloomfield
Chief Executive Officer
NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association