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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 10, 2020

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

Internet access has never been more important. The ability to stay connected to our jobs, our schools, our health care providers, and our loved ones—while staying home to protect our public health—is essential to Illinoisans facing the enormous challenges of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19 pandemic). As Congress works to enact additional coronavirus response packages that improve internet access and invest in broadband infrastructure, I urge you to help ensure these resources are delivered to the communities that most need them by prioritizing swift and thorough implementation of the Broadband DATA Act.

For too long, the rural and suburban communities I represent in northern Illinois have struggled to obtain reliable and affordable broadband service. The coronavirus pandemic has both heightened these existing needs and exposed new gaps. One constituent in Harvard, Illinois, wrote to me that the only broadband service available at his house is so slow that he is unable to work from home, forcing him to choose between risking his job or his health. Another constituent, a teacher in Batavia, shared stories of students in her classes whose home internet is too weak to allow them to fully participate in the video lessons she prepares for them.

The communities I represent, however, are currently denied the federal resources they need because of the unacceptably poor quality of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) broadband maps. These maps play a critical role in guiding federal spending but are riddled with inaccuracies that wrongly exclude communities like my own from federal support. Earlier this year, I was proud to support passage and enactment of the bipartisan Broadband DATA Act, which will greatly improve the accuracy, granularity, and transparency of FCC's flawed maps. As you know, this law also sets clear timelines for FCC's implementation of these improvements.

Rebuilding in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic will require robust and sustained investment by the federal government in broadband infrastructure. We must not make these investments for the twenty-first century using twentieth-century maps. In light of this crisis, I urge you to ensure

the FCC is prioritizing full and timely implementation of the urgently-needed reforms enacted by the Broadband DATA Act so that improved broadband maps can guide our federal response.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to working with you to expand broadband access in Illinois during this unprecedented public health emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lauren Underwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "L" and "U".

Lauren Underwood