

DOUG COLLINS

9TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

RANKING MEMBER

EMAIL VIA WEBSITE:

<https://dougcollins.house.gov>



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1009

DISTRICT OFFICE

210 WASHINGTON STREET NW  
SUITE 202  
GAINESVILLE, GA 30601  
(770) 297-3388

WASHINGTON OFFICE

1504 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-9893

June 3, 2019

Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing in regards to efforts by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to more accurately understand the availability of mobile and fixed broadband service in the United States.

Reliable broadband access is vital for rural communities to run their businesses, access educational resources, and operate public safety systems. Unfortunately, communities are often subject to subpar internet service, often at the hands of a functional monopoly.

I have long advocated for a larger focus on rural broadband and am pleased that President Trump has displayed a commitment to focusing on infrastructure, including rural broadband. I am proud to have introduced the Connect America Fund (CAF) Accountability Act (H.R. 427) in the House, a bill that would require internet service providers (ISPs) that receive taxpayer dollars through the CAF program to report additional information on the broadband speeds they are providing consumers in reports to the FCC. The additional transparency will ensure that more accurate speeds are being reported to the FCC, allowing the commission to better oversee and direct CAF dollars. Additionally, last Congress I introduced the Gigabit Opportunity (GO) Act (H.R. 2870), legislation to encourage investment in areas affected by poor internet service.

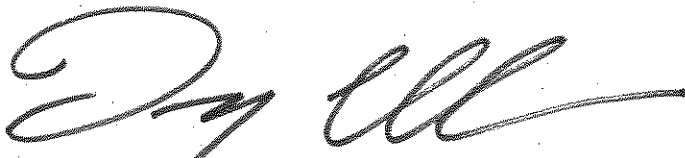
Under the Form 477 Data Program the FCC collects data from providers on broadband services, local telephone service competition, and mobile telephony services. Twice per year, all providers of fixed broadband are required to provide a list of all census blocks where fixed broadband service is currently available. Unfortunately, under this system that directly informs the FCC's broadband availability maps, providers can report a particular census block as "served" if just one location receives service. This is particularly detrimental in rural areas that have large census blocks and may be considered served if only a single neighborhood or location in that block has broadband service. Additionally, provider-reported data for both fixed and mobile broadband service lacks independent verification and validation, raising concerns about the accuracy and reliability of such data in determining broadband availability.

As the FCC explores ways to improve the quality, accuracy and usefulness of the data it collects on fixed and mobile voice and broadband service, I request that you give consideration to a more

granular method of reporting fixed broadband data—such as through the use of shapefiles that digitally represent geographic areas in which a customer could expect to receive broadband service. Such a method—already utilized to determine mobile broadband service—could allow the FCC to more precisely determine areas that are completely unserved by fixed broadband. Furthermore, I encourage the FCC to develop processes to better verify and validate provider-reported broadband data in order to make the most optimal funding and financing decisions.

It is critical to ensure that inaccurate information will not result in subpar or a complete lack of access to broadband. I look forward to working with you as the FCC continues to ensure Americans have access to reliable broadband.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Collins", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Doug Collins  
Ninth Congressional District of Georgia