

January 13, 2021

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, N.E.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write today regarding the recent announcement that Phase 1 of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction is complete, with more than \$9.2 billion slated to be awarded to reach more than 5.2 million unserved locations across rural America. We all hope this program will be a great success—and it is in that spirit that we write to encourage you to take every reasonable measure possible to ensure this turns out to be the case.

For far too long, too many Americans have lacked access to the affordable, high-speed broadband services they need to participate in today's online world. We appreciate the steps the FCC has taken to provide connectivity to more homes and businesses. The initial estimates of the locations that RDOF Phase 1 could connect are encouraging, and we are eager to see this program succeed so that more individuals and businesses receive the broadband services promised.

The hard work of carrying out this program will now begin in earnest. Transparency and accountability must be part and parcel of the administration of any program, and we urge you to thoroughly vet the winning bidders to ensure that they are capable of deploying and delivering the services they committed to providing. We therefore believe it is essential that the FCC apply the scrutiny needed to ensure the funding will be used wisely and effectively, consistent with the goals of the Universal Service Fund (USF) High Cost Program. Without proper due diligence today, we fear that we will not know whether funds were improperly spent for years to come.

As responsible stewards of USF funds, we ask that the FCC redouble its efforts to review the long-form applications that will now be submitted. We urge the FCC to validate that each provider in fact has the technical, financial, managerial, operational skills, capabilities, and resources to deliver the services that they have pledged for every American they plan to serve regardless of the technology they use. We also strongly encourage the FCC to make as public as possible the status of its review and consider opportunities for public input on the applications. Such transparency and accountability will be essential to ensure the success of this program and to minimize any opportunities for fraud or abuse.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to develop and implement programs to close the digital divide.

cc: The Honorable Brendan Carr
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
The Honorable Geoffrey Starks
The Honorable Nathan Simington