

March 1, 2016

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

On February 4, 2016, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation's Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet Subcommittee held a hearing entitled "*Ensuring Intermodal Universal Service Fund Support for Rural America*" where we, along with many of our colleagues, expressed our frustration with the inability of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to accurately measure mobile broadband coverage available to consumers, especially in rural areas. There is an obvious disconnect between official FCC statistics and our own and our constituents' real-world experiences, and we urge you to work with stakeholders to identify more accurate ways to measure available mobile wireless coverage.

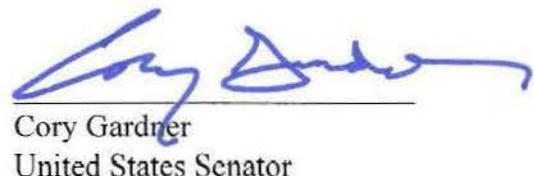
In 2014, the FCC declared that over 99% of the U.S. population was covered by some form of mobile broadband technology. Independent studies, however, indicate that the reality in our states is dramatically different than the FCC narrative. For example, one study found that wireless coverage in rural communities can be as low as 77% in West Virginia and 81% in North Carolina. The 2016 Broadband Progress Report acknowledges the limitations that prevent the FCC from reporting geographic areas that lack advanced mobile services with reliable accuracy. We believe that you must partner with industry and other stakeholders to solve this problem. We cannot afford to ignore it any longer.

Universal service – the idea that all Americans, regardless of age, income, and area code, should have access to essential communications services – has been the foundation of federal communications policy since the inception of the FCC. Not that long ago, this required running a landline to each home. Today, with nearly half of all U.S. households solely reliant on cellphones, universal service means ensuring access to both fixed and mobile broadband service. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you to fulfill our responsibility to the American people.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Kelly A. Ayotte

Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator

Deb Fischer

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Jerry Moran

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

Brian Schatz

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Steve Daines

Steve Daines
United States Senator