

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

September 10, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20536

**962**

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

As you recognize, access to broadband internet is essential to the continued economic and social vitality of rural communities, where it provides critical tools for citizens to start businesses, obtain a quality education and keep in touch with family and friends. Robust broadband service enables businesses in small towns and remote areas to compete in the global marketplace. Without it, the same communities risk being left behind in today's technology-centric economy.

Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II) is an incredible opportunity to bring state-of-the-art high speed, fiber-fed broadband to millions of Americans, including thousands of Granite Staters, who wouldn't otherwise receive access to an increasingly essential communications network. Rural communities across the nation are counting on the Commission and CAF II to deliver broadband connections to residents that lack service and access to the expanding digital economy.

Unfortunately, the Universal Service Fund has failed New Hampshire. According to the most recent FCC statistics from 2012, New Hampshire residents contributed \$40.5 million to the USF while receiving only \$15.1 million in return. This is a return of 37 cents for every dollar we contribute, while many communities in the state remain unserved. We are writing today to emphasize how important it is to ensure that the final details of CAF II live up to its promise. While we applaud the Commission's proposal to increase download speeds to 10 Mbps, we also encourage the Commission to allow an appropriate level of flexibility in other elements of CAF II to ensure that the program's overall mission is not compromised by such a significant increase in speed requirements.

We encourage the Commission to build on a number of constructive ideas identified in the June 10 FNPRM that may bolster efforts to achieve a faster network without exceeding the CAF II budget. In particular, should the Commission increase speed requirements, we believe that the CAF II funding period should also be extended to allow adequate time for the construction of the higher-capacity network. We also urge the Commission to use the same download standard it will require of CAF II recipients when identifying broadband availability from competitors, as any discrepancy could leave behind communities that meet only the 4 Mbps standard. As the Commission moves forward on the implementation of CAF II, it must remain focused on the

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goal of expanding access to quality broadband connections while efficiently distributing its resources.

We encourage you to verify that the FCC is targeting support to unserved areas where broadband would not otherwise be available. Now that we are in the final phase, we hope the CAF II standards can reach those unserved customers, and also require alternative broadband providers to meet a reasonable standard of verification before depriving a community of CAF II support.

Despite the fact that high speed broadband is increasingly available in urban communities, we continue to hear from constituents in rural areas who seek assistance obtaining broadband service in their homes. CAF II represents an important step toward meeting the needs of these individuals and is an important opportunity to support rural economies in New Hampshire and across the nation.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Kelly A. Ayotte  
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress