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## United States Senate

July 6, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write today about the importance of connecting rural America and closing the digital divide. Specifically regarding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) decision to advance the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF), a \$20 billion program for rural broadband projects. While I commend the FCC for committing to build out in rural areas, I have strong concerns that the FCC's current implementation plans for this program will leave many rural communities further behind.

In March of this year, Congress passed my Broadband DATA Act with overwhelmingly bipartisan support to change the FCC's broadband data collection, verification, and reporting methods. Congress came together and agreed the FCC's census block level data is insufficient for creating broadband coverage maps. Under this new law, accurate and granular data will enable the FCC to target funding to the areas that need it most and close remaining coverage gaps.

Despite this clear directive from Congress, the FCC plans to move forward with Phase 1 of RDOF and distribute \$16 billion (nearly 80 percent of the entire 10-year Fund) before implementing the Broadband Data Act. I share your sense of urgency on increasing high-speed internet access as it is critically important for rural communities to stay connected and competitive in a 21st century economy. However, it is irresponsible for the FCC to allocate \$16 billion using incorrect data that gives an incomplete picture of the nation's broadband gaps. I fear this will turn into another broken promise from the FCC and rural America deserves better.

I urge you to reconsider and stand ready to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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