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# United States Senate

May 23, 2019

Joel Baxley, Administrator  
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Baxley:

Many communities in Montana still lack access to quality and reliable broadband services despite the necessity to compete in the twenty-first century. In order to maximize the economic contributions of rural Montana, communities need access to broadband in order to survive. This is why I was proud to support the USDA's ReConnect program.

I write this letter in support of Southern Montana Telephone's application to increase broadband access to unserved Montana. The ReConnect program is the optimal funding opportunity for states like Montana that lack the population base to support any infrastructure investment in many of our communities. The "digital divide" is only widening and becoming more cost prohibited for rural communities each year. I am confident that organizations like Southern Montana Telephone will use ReConnect funding to make transformational changes in Montana communities.

Thank you for your attention to this application. If I can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would also appreciate you informing my office of the eventual decision on this application.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester  
United States Senator