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United States Senate

July 10, 2020

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write today about the important role telehealth plays in keeping rural communities healthy and the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) new Connected Care Pilot Program. As the FCC carries out this program, I request more information on the selection process and urge the FCC to consider the powerful impact this initiative could have on rural areas.

Telemedicine efficiently connects folks with their doctors, eliminates geographic barriers, and reduces healthcare costs, all while limiting exposure to the COVID-19 virus. The FCC's new Connected Care Pilot Program will provide up to \$100 million of support to help defray health care providers' costs of providing connected care services and to help assess how Universal Service Funds can be used in the long term to support telehealth.

While I'm supportive of the FCC is exploring new ways to expand telehealth service, I have strong concerns that these efforts will not prioritize or include the areas that need them the most. For example, while Congress recently allocated \$200 million to the FCC to expand telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am alarmed that Montana-based health care providers did not receive any of these funds. My state responded quickly and effectively to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, but the fight is not over and we cannot afford to miss these opportunities to improve access to health care.

Given this exclusion, the FCC must be transparent on implementation of the Connected Care Pilot Program. I request detailed information on how the FCC will determine the number of pilots, the application selection process, the performance metrics, and the long-term plans for this program. In addition, I urge the FCC to consider the specific needs of rural areas when allocating funds.

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Rural areas have the most to gain from expanding telehealth services and we cannot leave them behind. Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter and I stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester