



**Advocates for Rural Broadband**

David Shipley  
President

Kelly Worthington  
Executive Vice President

December 4, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband’s more than 350 small business members serving hundreds of thousands of customers, I’m writing to ask you to consider providing support to small Internet service providers (ISPs) in year-end legislation.

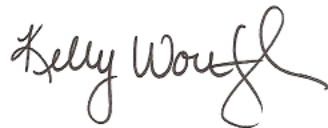
This spring, as the COVID-19 pandemic surged across the country and state and local governments shut down many businesses, schools, and anchor institutions, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) asked Internet service providers to take the Keep Americans Connected pledge. More than 800 providers pledged: 1) to not terminate communications services due to a customer’s inability to pay; 2) waive late fees; and 3) open additional, free hot-spots where needed.

In addition, most of the small ISPs our association represents provided free upgrades to existing customers with students in the home and worked with local school systems to identify households that did not have service to get them connected free of charge. As businesses that were deemed essential by the federal government, they also had to purchase personal protective equipment for their employees to ensure they could keep working.

The Keeping Critical Connections Act (S. 3569, H.R. 6394), bi-partisan, bi-cameral legislation introduced this spring, would establish and fund a program at the FCC to reimburse small ISPs for some of the costs they incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and keeping the FCC pledge. The House bill has 39 cosponsors, while over a third of the Senate has cosponsored the Senate version. These lawmakers have recognized that small ISPs were vital to the effort to ensure no one lost service due to government-imposed shut downs.

I ask that you consider including a mechanism and requisite funding along the lines outlined in the Keeping Critical Connections Act in legislation moving through Congress before the end of the year. While this targeted, immediate reimbursement would not obviate the need for more robust broadband network investment through the federal Universal Service Fund, it would go a long way to helping small ISPs through the current crisis. The small ISPs WTA represents continue to expand broadband access and make sure no one is disconnected due to inability to pay because of pandemic-related circumstances. They do this because they are part of the communities they serve. As you craft year-end legislation, I ask that you consider this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Worthington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Kelly Worthington  
Executive Vice President