

June 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: Supporting Broadband Sustainability by Including the Universal Broadband Act in Any Comprehensive Infrastructure Package**

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We make up small cooperative, family-owned, and commercial broadband providers, national agricultural stakeholders, health care providers and advocates, national cooperative banks and lending institutions, manufacturers, and local leaders who all share a commitment to ensuring rural Americans receive reliable and affordable broadband to engage with critical activities such as telemedicine, agriculture, distance learning, and remote work. We commend your leadership and ongoing interest in advancing efforts to deploy broadband in rural America. As the House moves to consider a comprehensive infrastructure package in the coming weeks, we respectfully request the inclusion of Representatives Collin Peterson and Don Young's H.R. 6723, the Universal Broadband Act, which seeks to ensure that the Federal Communications Commission's universal service programs, which have been and remain so critical to bridge digital divides, sit atop a solid and more reliable foundation.

The Universal Broadband Act will expand the pool of providers that contribute to the Universal Service Fund (USF)—the program that enables such connectivity for schools, libraries, rural, high-cost areas, and low income households—by including broadband services. Unfortunately, even as the importance of universal broadband connectivity increases and the USF serves as an essential tool for advancing such connectivity, the system that governs contributions to the USF is based upon 1990s-era service definitions and has continued to erode and become less stable. By directing the expansion of the USF contribution base to include broadband access services—those very services that have become a primary focus of our country's shared universal service mission—this bipartisan bill charts a course for steadier long-term support of the USF program on a more equitable basis, and it will therefore help to promote achievement of all aspects of that mission.

Now, as Americans telecommute, educate our children remotely, and try to stay connected with family and friends online, it is impossible to overlook or overstate the critical role that broadband communications play in our nation's economy and in promoting the health and well-being of millions of Americans. To ensure sustainability of universal service programs to support this vital broadband connectivity, we ask that any comprehensive infrastructure package include H.R. 6723, the Universal Broadband Act. Thank you for your consideration of this request as we work

toward a more stable foundation beneath all the essential universal service programs. We look forward to working with Congress on this critical issue as this debate moves forward.

Sincerely,

American Association for Respiratory Care

Association of Equipment Manufacturers

American Farm Bureau Federation

Association of Minnesota Counties

CoBank

Consolidated Telecommunications Company

Farm Credit Council

National Farmers Union

National Rural Health Association

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association

Power & Communication Contractors Association

WTA—Advocates for Rural Broadband

CC:

The Honorable Jim McGovern, Chairman  
House Committee on Rules  
408 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Rules  
2207 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515