March 3, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Room S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Vice Chairman Shelby:

As trade associations representing the communications service providers and vendors connecting Americans with advanced communications services, we take national security extremely seriously, and security issues are paramount to our members' operations. We support rapidly completing the removal and replacement of equipment and services that pose national security risks to the United States from American networks. As created by the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act ("STCNA"), the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program ("STCNRP") is key to ensuring that this removal and replacement can be completed by advanced communications service providers, particularly smaller providers and those serving rural areas, including in areas where consumers may not have an alternative service provider. As we now know, the resources demanded to complete this mission will exceed funding currently provided to the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") to carry out the STCNRP. In response to the national security emergency posed by covered equipment and services, we urge Congress to expeditiously provide the FCC with additional funding to fully complete this critical mission.

In 2020, Congress created and appropriated $1.9 billion for the Reimbursement Program to assist providers in removal and replacement of equipment and services covered by the STCNA. In a Public Notice on February 9, 2022, the FCC announced that it had received 181 applications and that "the gross cost estimate demand … contained in the applications initially found eligible and acceptable for filing is nearly $5.6 billion." This amount clearly exceeds the $1.895 billion currently appropriated to be used for reimbursement costs.

Barring further resources, the FCC will be forced to implement prorating available funding using the prioritization process directed by Congress. Due to the significant amount of shortfall from current appropriations, prorating funding without additional resources threatens to significantly limit the ability

of the STCNRP to complete its mission. Service providers, which have already expended or committed significant resources under the assurance that reimbursements would be available, could be left unable to complete the removal and replacement of covered equipment and services, or be forced to shutter their business entirely, threatening the availability and security of advanced communications across the country, particularly in rural America. The need is urgent. Delays in providing additional resources could have a chilling effect on accomplishing the goals directed by Congress to secure our nation's communications networks.

Communications providers, vendors, Congress, the intelligence community, the FCC, and two Administrations have worked closely to identify risks, facilitate critical information sharing, and take action to ensure the safety and security of America's communications networks. We respectfully urge Congress continue to support the FCC's Reimbursement Program with funds needed to secure the United States' communications networks.

<div align="center">Sincerely,</div>

ACA Connects – America's Communications Association
Competitive Carriers Association
Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)
NATE: The Communications Infrastructure Contractors Association
NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association
Rural Wireless Association
Telecommunications Industry Association
Wireless Infrastructure Association
WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband

cc:

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation