



December 8, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing the U.S. information and communications industry, we write to urge Congress to fully fund the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program (Program). The Program, known as “Rip & Replace,” was mandated by the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act of 2019 to remove from U.S. networks Chinese equipment deemed to pose a national security risk and replace it with equipment from trusted vendors. In July, the FCC identified a funding shortfall of \$3.08 billion to fully fund the Program’s approved application cost estimates. Absent the funding of this shortfall, carriers could only be reimbursed for approximately 40% of their costs, which would preclude them from completing the process. The successful implementation of this Congressionally mandated national security imperative depends on fully and immediately funding the Program.

This Program is a critical, and essentially the only, mechanism for wireless carriers and communications providers in rural America to remove, replace, and destroy communications equipment and services in their networks that pose a national security risk. Because of the funding shortfall, untrusted equipment is still in service today, including some near military bases, airports, and other areas of strategic importance. Timing is critical – the FCC’s July announcement started the clock for completion of this critical work. The window is closing on this high-priority and accelerated Program, and carriers cannot implement the plans needed to complete the job without full funding.

Failure to fund the Program will mean that carriers cannot complete the job of removing and replacing vital equipment in their networks, and the result will be partial or complete shutdowns of service in many areas where no other carrier provides service. This will affect not only the rural carriers’ direct

subscribers, but also the only connectivity available to millions of other consumers when travelling through their networks' signals, including the ability to make emergency and 9-1-1 calls.

Affected carriers have already begun the "rip and replace" process at the direction of both Congress and the FCC, committing and expending significant resources in good faith reliance that the Program would be fully funded. Beyond planning, some carriers cannot begin implementation until more funding is available or they risk being stuck mid-stream with no path forward and no path back. All of these carriers urgently want to complete the transition to secure and trusted networks, as they have been largely prohibited from servicing or upgrading their networks for years, increasing chances for network degradation or even failure and leaving their communities behind as technology evolves to 5G and beyond. While the United States has taken a leadership position internationally about the risks of untrusted communications networks, work remains to eliminate that risk in our own heartland.

The FCC does not have the ability to provide additional resources for this Program – only Congress can provide funding to resolve the shortfall. We urge you to prioritize this national security emergency by fully and immediately funding the Program before the 117th Congress adjourns.

Sincerely,

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, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr., Chair, House Committee on Energy & Commerce
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy & Commerce