



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

May 30, 2018

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
United States Senate  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wicker:

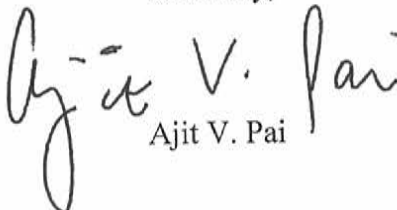
Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's Mobility Fund Phase II. Many rural Americans have waited far too long to get access to the high-speed mobile broadband that is common in our nation's largest cities. Despite promises made in 2011, the Mobility Fund Phase II lay largely dormant until February 2017, when the Commission finally committed itself to get this fund up and running. With \$4.53 billion in investment for rural America over the next ten years, the Mobility Fund Phase II is a critical means of ensuring every American has next-generation mobile connectivity. And to make sure that we're not duplicating private capital but instead targeting those areas without access, we standardized our mobile broadband data collection and launched a robust challenge process.

I am committed to ensuring that the challenge process will produce a high-quality map. To this end, we made sure state, local, and Tribal governments—not just carriers—were able to participate. We sent Commission staff to hold on-site training events in New Mexico, Kansas, West Virginia, Maine, New Hampshire, and Washington state, with another planned for tomorrow in Mississippi. We released a map of areas most susceptible to challenge, that is those where only one unsubsidized carrier reported offering service, so that challengers could better target their efforts. We also changed the parameters of speed testing for challengers, reducing the number of measurements required to successfully challenge an area. And we hope to release the list of qualifying handsets to the public in the next two weeks so that local governments can more easily enlist volunteers.

Nevertheless, I agree with you that the agency should be exercising its discretion to ensure that the challenge process is as robust as possible. Accordingly, I support extending the challenge process window by 90 days and have directed the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force to figure out the procedural steps necessary to do just that. By lengthening the period during which challenges can be submitted, challengers will have an opportunity to conduct additional tests, which in turn means a more accurate map for carrying out the Mobility Fund Phase II auction.

Like you, the Commission is focused on ensuring that our limited universal service funds are effectively and accurately targeted to areas that lack unsubsidized 4G LTE service. This is a vital part of our strategy toward closing the wireless dimension of the digital divide. I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

  
Ajit V. Pai