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## United States Senate

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May 21, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street Southwest  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write to express my concern over the Commission's reported proposal to cap spending for the Universal Service Fund (USF). Limiting resources to this crucial program directly conflicts with the Commission's goal of providing reliable communication services to all Americans.

The mechanisms in place under the USF are vital for bridging the digital divide between rural and urban communities, a goal you often tout. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not having access to high-quality broadband is like not having access to electricity: it is vital for a community's economic development, allowing individuals to work remotely, entrepreneurs to innovate, and businesses to reach distant markets.

Access to high-speed internet is also vital for a community's wellbeing. Thanks to USF funds, more rural libraries offer high-speed broadband to local residents; more rural patients enjoy the benefits of modern telemedicine, saving them long drives to see a specialist; and more rural students have access high-speed internet in their school. According to a study done by the Pew Research Center, a vast majority of U.S. educators give assignments that require internet access, creating an unfair "homework gap" between students who have broadband access and those who do not. Capping USF funds would risk extending that gap, along with many others.

As our lives become more dependent on access to high-quality broadband, we should be expanding our efforts to close the digital divide, not curtailing them. Placing a cap on the USF is tantamount to placing a cap on opportunity for rural communities across America. Though there are undoubtedly opportunities to improve efficiency within USF and better prioritize funds, a spending cap is the wrong approach. I ask that you reconsider this proposal.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator