

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4805

May 6, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

As we have discussed, one of my top priorities in the Senate has been to get all of West Virginia connected with quality broadband service. The opportunity to get the more than 100,000 unserved locations in West Virginia broadband access is finally here through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. The Biden Administration took years and years and burdened states and internet service providers (ISPs) with unnecessary mandates like labor requirements, climate change provisions, and some cumbersome financial requirements and did not connect a single location through BEAD. You can succeed where the previous administration failed and deliver this service quickly and efficiently to millions of Americans primarily in rural areas.

West Virginia has been allocated \$1.2 billion to connect the state. The BEAD statute specifically says it is to be a technology neutral program. Some states may prefer fiber, others fixed wireless, and others satellite. Whatever technology or combination of technologies works best for the state and serves the most people while staying within the allocated funding amount should move forward.

When the BEAD program review was initiated on March 5, my state was 6 weeks away from completing the arduous application process after so many steps including a completed fair project selection process. Removing much of the red-tape from the program in a timely manner, so that my state and all others could move forward even faster is an ideal outcome.

As we have discussed, I am concerned that West Virginia may be told to move back from the 1-yard line to the 40-yard line after the review concludes. Many of the changes that should be made to the program can be made quickly, but as an

example, reopening the subgrantee application process for ISPs could delay connecting rural Americans for another year. I also am concerned that an arbitrary one-size-fits-all cost cap could be imposed for each connection. West Virginia is the Mountain State, so connecting us may be inherently more expensive than most every other state. In addition certain technologies are not feasible in many areas not only due to our challenging topography but also because 78 percent of the state is forested.

Like you, I am opposed to outlandish costs for a single connection but those decisions should be made with a more tailored approach by the states in consultation with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. My state is committed to achieving the goals of the program with the utmost efficiency.

I urge you to expedite not only the review and release of updated guidance but the program as a whole. West Virginians have waited long enough, and I hope with your leadership they will soon have broadband access and this will be President Trump and your greatest accomplishment for rural America.

Sincerely,



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator