

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 2019

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

Dear Chairman Pai,

As Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (the Commission) work together to close the digital divide, we encourage the Commission to act swiftly to fix its broadband deployment data collection and reporting process. Precise, granular, and accurate data is essential to determining which parts of the country remain unserved and where to more efficiently target broadband deployment funding. Improved data is essential for Congress and the Commission to identify where adequate broadband service is and is not available, and how to avoid subsidizing overbuilding of existing networks.

On June 12, 2019, the Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing examining policy issues and providing oversight of the Commission. At that hearing, you announced that you would present to the Commission a plan for providing more accurate broadband maps very soon. As you recognized, the Commission's census block-based data collection and reporting can overstate coverage, especially in geographically large census blocks. This can unfairly identify unserved locations and even entire communities as being served, resulting in those places missing out on desperately needed funding support. For this reason, among others, there is a broad bipartisan consensus that the Commission should move away from its census block-based reporting process.

As the Commission continues to work towards a solution and takes up the proposed report and order at the Commission's August meeting, we encourage you to look at the proposals Congress has already introduced, which include reforms that would require wired, fixed wireless and satellite broadband providers to submit data that is more granular and precise to the Commission. For instance, allowing fixed broadband providers to submit "shapefiles" would provide more detailed information about the areas they actually serve than the current census block approach.

Furthermore, we believe that it is critical that any proposal offered by the Commission provide consumers, state, local and tribal government entities the opportunity to challenge erroneous coverage data. Such a process will help the Commission improve the accuracy of the data it receives. These proposals would provide the Commission with an effective framework to begin to replace its flawed census block-based system.

We appreciate the Commission's consideration of our suggestions for ways to improve its broadband data collection and reporting initiative, and look forward to working with you to close the digital divide.

Sincerely,



Shelley Moore Capito

United States Senator



Jerry Moran

United States Senator



Brian Schatz

United States Senator



Jon Tester

United States Senator