

United States Senate

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COMMITTEES
APPROPRIATIONS
ARMED SERVICES
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

July 18, 2019

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

Dear Chairman Pai,

In 2015 when the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) broadband coverage maps indicated that 99.9% of Americans had wireless coverage, I invited your predecessor, Tom Wheeler, to West Virginia to see for himself just how bad coverage was on the ground. Sadly, four years later and after writing countless letters to you on this subject, questioning you about it in hearings, and even challenging one of your agency's federal coverage maps, the FCC's maps are still woefully inaccurate, and they are hurting the economy and the people of West Virginia.

As you know, last November, I became the only member of Congress ever to submit a formal and successful challenge to a federal broadband coverage map when I participated in the Mobility Fund Phase II (MF-II) Challenge Process. The aptly named Challenge Process for MF-II did have its flaws, but rather than considering it the end of an imperfect experiment, we should look to it as the beginning of a new, collaborative mapping process that encourages people to participate. That is why I introduced the Map Improvement Act (S. 1485) with Senator Gardner, which, if passed, would require the establishment of a user-friendly public feedback mechanism to validate carrier reported data. The people of West Virginia can certainly tell you where they do and do not have coverage. We just need to give them a voice in the process.

While I am encouraged by reports that you are considering establishing a formal public feedback mechanism to improve broadband coverage maps, the people of West Virginia need help now. Until a more viable process is established, I will be providing you with real coverage data from people on the ground in West Virginia and a brief description of the challenges they face personally, professionally, and economically as a result of their unreliable broadband service.

In June, my staff visited Harman's Luxury Cabins in Cabins, West Virginia, located within the Monongahela National Forest and near some of the most iconic sites in West Virginia like Seneca Rocks, Spruce Knob and Dolly Sods. These cabins are an ideal place for anglers, hikers, bikers, hunters, and rafters who want to explore all that area has to offer. Unfortunately, I have been alerted that Harman's has received several cancelations due to their unreliable internet service.

West Virginia is an outdoorsman's dream and the perfect location for an office retreat or a weekend getaway. However, while people may choose to visit my state to unplug, that does not necessarily mean they want to be completely disconnected. The lack of broadband access is

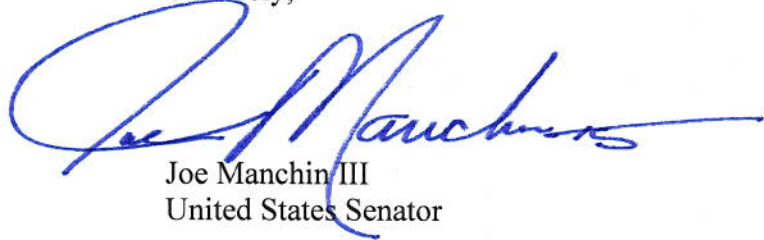
having devastating impacts on the tourism industry in my state, one of our largest economic drivers. Ironically, the same things that attract people to visit my beautiful state - our tall mountains, lush forests, rolling hills and roaring rapids - make broadband deployment astronomically expensive.

Using the Ookla Speed Testing Application on a Samsung Galaxy phone to test their fixed broadband service from Frontier Communications, my office received the following speed results at Harman's:

1. .03mbps down / .1mbps up (Frontier)
2. .12mbps down / .04mbps up (Frontier)
3. .25mbps down / .04mbps up (Frontier)
4. .19mbps down / .24mbps up (Frontier)

These numbers are well below your agency's definition of broadband and the advertised speed they were given by their provider. I hope you will use this data to validate the information West Virginia's broadband providers have submitted to the FCC and ensure that they are eligible for any and all relevant broadband grants and other resources. Places like Harman's Luxury Cabins in Cabins, WV depend on the promise of universal service, and it is our job to make good on that promise.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator