

April 19, 2021

John Stankey
CEO, AT&T
208 S. Akard Street
Dallas, Texas 75202

Dear Mr. Stankey,

Every day millions of Americans rely on broadband to access important healthcare, government, and education resources. This has been especially true over the last year during the pandemic, when broadband became a vital lifeline to the outside world for many people. And while advances and investments in mobile wireless data services, such as 5G, are exciting and welcome, they also risk only benefiting some places and furthering the digital divide in many areas of the United States. Consumers that are struggling financially or have no other mobile wireless options need adequate information and support so they do not suffer additional hardships as companies begin to shut down these legacy services. We must ensure that we do not leave these consumers behind in the move to 5G.

Researchers estimate that approximately 13% of Americans rely on older 2G or 3G technology,¹ with other estimates putting that number higher.² In some areas, 2G and 3G services are the only mobile wireless service available, and this is particularly true in rural and secluded areas where 4G and 5G technologies have not yet been deployed. For many customers who live in these areas, a mobile wireless connection is their only tool for staying in touch with friends and family, doing homework, or making a living. Shutting down 2G and 3G services in these areas without adequate notice, or before 4G or 5G services are available as a replacement, risks leaving millions of Americans completely disconnected.

AT&T's transition away from 3G services may also create new financial hardships for customers, who need to use 3G because of its lower cost or capabilities. This is particularly true for seniors, many of whom continue to use older devices for emergency use, and only need voice capabilities. Moreover, a typical 3G device and subscription is much less expensive than a 4G enabled phone and subscription, and requiring customers to purchase new 4G and 5G plans will result in thousands of dollars in additional expense. This could be excessively burdensome for families who have already been hard hit by the pandemic.

AT&T has announced that it will be shutting down its 3G networks in 2022,³ but the company has not provided any information regarding what support, financial or otherwise, will be provided to its customers who will be transitioned off their existing plan. Moreover,

[1] "The Mobile Economy: North America 2020," *GSMA*. https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/GSMA_MobileEconomy2020_NorthAmerica.pdf

[2] Carl Wienschenk, "Report: Amidst 5G Rush, 17% of U.S. Subscribers Still on 3G," *Telecompetitor*, December 19, 2020. <https://www.telecompetitor.com/report-17-of-u-s-subscribers-still-on-3g/>

[3] "Get Ready, 3G is going away in 2022," *AT&T*, March 3, 2021. https://www.att.com/support/article/wireless/KM1324171?source=EC1N000000wrt00E&wtExtndSource=0620_j3_gs_nat_a_ctal

the company has not made any assurances that its 3G networks will not be shut down in a customer's area before a 4G or 5G roll out is completed. Although sun-setting the 3G network might free up more spectrum for 4G and 5G, some of these networks were funded by federal universal service dollars to ensure adequate, affordable broadband for all. AT&T has a responsibility to make sure that as it transitions to cutting-edge technologies, the digital divide is narrowed and not widened.

Accordingly, please answer the following questions by May 3, 2021, regarding AT&T's plans to shut down its 2G and 3G networks:

- 1) How many AT&T customers currently rely on 3G services? Which states have the highest numbers of 3G customers, both as a total number and as a portion of AT&T's total subscribers?
- 2) What information have you provided to your current 3G customers regarding the transition to 4G and 5G services? Has AT&T provided its customers with the date on which it intends end their 3G services?
- 3) Does AT&T have any services or offerings designed for customers transitioning from 3G services? Is AT&T offering any financial support for customers who may not be able to afford more expensive 4G and 5G devices and services? How will AT&T support customers who currently do not have a 4G or 5G handset?
- 4) Will AT&T immediately provide 4G and 5G services in areas where it plans to shut down its 3G networks? If not, how long will it take for AT&T to deliver 4G and 5G services in those areas? How will AT&T ensure that the shutdown of its 3G networks do not leave some customers without mobile wireless service?
- 5) How will the 3G shutdown impact access to public safety and 9-1-1 services?
- 6) How will the 3G shutdown impact non-cellular devices and other devices and systems that are not mobile phones on your networks? How many of these devices will be impacted in each state?
- 7) How will the shutdown of 3G services impact the ability of other carriers to use AT&T network for roaming traffic or wholesale services? What is AT&T doing to ensure that the voice traffic of roaming carriers will not be impacted?
- 8) Can current 3G customers change service providers during this transition without incurring additional fees? If so, what information have you provided customers on how to do this?
- 9) How has AT&T trained its customer service representatives to assist and provide resources to 3G customers during the transition? What are these resources and when will they be available to customers?
- 10) What other steps, if any, is AT&T taking or has planned to take to ensure that this transition closes rather than widens the digital divide? Please describe in terms of both availability and affordability.

I look forward to hearing from you about AT&T's plans regarding the shutdown of its 3G services and how you plan to support customers that currently rely on these technologies.

Sincerely,



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



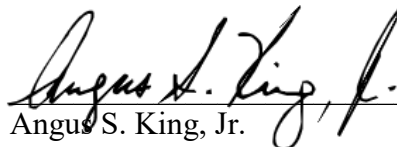
Joe Manchin, III
United States Senator



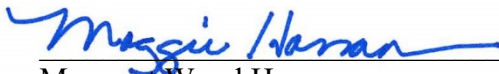
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator




Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



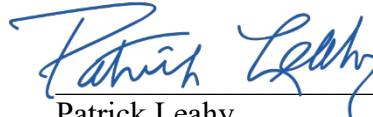
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



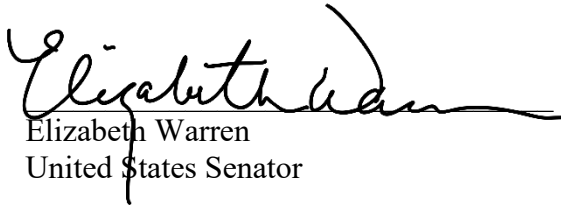
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator