



JONATHAN SPALTER
President and Chief Executive Officer

February 6, 2019

Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
& Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
& Transportation
425 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell:

Thank you for holding the February 6th hearing titled “Winning the Race to 5G and the Next Era of Technology Innovation in the United States.” USTelecom represents broadband providers, suppliers and manufacturers in every corner of the country and internationally. Our innovative members – large and small – connect communities through the promise of broadband and underpin the global digital economy.

I commend you for holding your first hearing of the 116th Congress on 5G and technology innovation, and your focus on maintaining America’s global leadership. While the testimony you heard primarily focused on small cells and the spectrum needed to enable 5G, it is important to acknowledge that all wireless connections – from 4G LTE to 5G and the Internet of Things – depend on a ubiquitous and resilient wired backbone.

America’s broadband companies have invested hundreds of billions of dollars in the wired networks that are the foundation of all communications in America, including wireless, but the job remains far from complete. As FCC Chairman Ajit Pai acknowledges in his “5G Fast Plan,” in addition to spectrum and infrastructure, the third essential input of the 5G future is a commitment to “modernizing outdated regulations to promote 5G backhaul.” Thus, as the Committee focuses on accelerating the push to 5G, it is fundamental that your focus include the wired side of the equation as well.

While our companies have made significant progress deploying next generation networks, more attention is necessary to continue fiber deployment more deeply into all areas of the country, particularly rural markets. Without sufficient wireline infrastructure in remote parts of the country, rural Americans risk not participating in the 5G future. At the core, that means promoting a regulatory climate that frees up more capital for investment and targeting broadband support from government sources to rural areas where it is otherwise uneconomic to serve. As you prepare your agenda for the 116th Congress, we urge you to address several important issues consistent with these objectives:

- Include meaningful broadband funding in Congressional infrastructure legislation;
- Enact a national framework to codify open internet and consumer privacy rules that apply to all companies within the internet ecosystem to provide the regulatory certainty necessary for investment, innovation and consumer confidence;
- Pursue additional steps to streamline the permitting process for wireline broadband infrastructure;

- Ensure rate parity and consistent regulatory treatment for pole attachments among all companies providing broadband service.

Wired infrastructure, including increasingly dense fiber networks, is essential to making widespread 5G a reality. While we focus on paving the way for cells large and small to deliver the wireless signals to our devices, we must at the same time prioritize responsible, modern and streamlined regulations for deploying the wired infrastructure that enables wireless signals to reach families, communities and enterprises everywhere. We are encouraged by the Committee's prioritization of these issues and look forward to working with you to ensure all Americans are connected by world-class infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Spalter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan Spalter