



July 8, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump
 President of the United States
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
 Majority Leader
 United States Senate
 Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
 Minority Leader
 United States Senate
 Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
 Speaker of the House
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
 Minority Leader
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. President and Congressional Leaders:

On behalf of our collective companies and organizations, we thank you for your quick leadership to provide much needed relief to American workers, families and communities responding and struggling amid the global COVID-19 pandemic.

We are writing as members of the American Connection Project Broadband Coalition, a collection of 49 major companies and trade associations being led by Land O'Lakes, Inc. The coalition, representing companies and organizations involved in agriculture, energy, financial services,

healthcare, education and technology, is strongly advocating for robust federal investment in broadband internet connectivity to advance telehealth, distance learning, precision agriculture and the tremendous economic value that comes with internet connectivity.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has made the urgent need for internet connectivity clear. As millions shifted to work from home; school districts closed and resorted to distance learning platforms; and increasingly, patients sought healthcare through telemedicine platforms to reduce pressure on the healthcare system and reduce risk of unnecessary exposure, internet access has become essential to everyday life.

According to the FCC, 18 million Americans lack internet connectivity – 14 million of whom live and work in rural communities across the country; however, a BroadbandNow study released in February 2020 indicates a much larger number lacking access: they estimate 42 million Americans do not have the ability to purchase broadband internet.¹ In today's economy, these communities, children, and families without adequate access are left behind, and the consequences are staggering from an economic, health, education, and social standpoint.

An [FCC report from 2017](#)ⁱⁱ estimates it would cost \$80 billion to bring high-speed internet to the remaining parts of our country that do not have access. Last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [issued a report](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, citing Deloitte data, that estimated it would require “between \$130 and \$150 billion over the next five to seven years, to adequately support rural coverage and 5G wireless densification.”

We need to fix this problem, together.

We write you today to call for immediate action from Congress and the Administration to enact groundbreaking broadband connectivity legislation that includes the necessary resources to close the digital divide in this country. A bold investment will be essential for the near-term and long-term well-being of our nation. As we make this investment, we must recognize the higher costs of operating in rural areas and ensure that the solution accounts for the costs to sustain these systems while maintaining affordability.

We join a chorus of voices at the state level from across the United States, with recent calls from both [State Attorneys General](#)^{iv} and [Governors](#)^v urging Congress to close the digital divide.

As coalition partners, with employees, members, patients, students and business operations in every state across the country, we see the impacts that the lack of connectivity has on families, businesses, employees and communities every day. That's also why many of our businesses and associations joined together amid the pandemic to provide free guest Wi-Fi access in hundreds of communities across America to allow families to come to our parking lots, stay in their cars, and access telehealth appointments; use distance learning platforms; and perform critical daily business such as paying their online bills and doing telework. Further, for those who have access, service providers among our coalition have offered free or discounted services to many households during the pandemic. We recognize these are short-term fixes and Americans need a long-term solution.

As we look to help our nation recover from this global pandemic, let's make a smart investment in the future competitiveness of this country and ensure that all Americans, in both rural and urban areas, are able to access the internet. The benefits are tangible: a study from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Technology Engagement Center found that “better adoption of online tools and digital

services by businesses outside metropolitan areas could create 360,000 new full-time jobs in rural areas and add more than \$140 billion to the U.S. economy over the next three years.”^{vi}

Additionally, in a 2019 study entitled *A Case for Rural Broadband*, USDA estimated the total economic impact in agriculture could exceed \$18 billion per year if broadband infrastructure allowed the deployment of next generation precision agriculture.^{vii} Further, we know that improving Americans’ access to broadband will allow for even greater access to telework opportunities, enhance distance learning and continuing education, and improve the health and wellbeing of our families, businesses and communities long into the future. There is no investment that will deliver more impactful or immediate returns.

If you have any questions or we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Matthew Wohlman, Sr. Director of State and Industry Affairs at Land O’Lakes, Inc., via email at mwohlman@landolakes.com.

Sincerely,

Beth Ford
President and CEO
Land O’Lakes, Inc.

Kate Johnson
U.S. President
Microsoft

Tom Halverson
President and CEO
CoBank

Tomislav Mihaljevic, MD
CEO
Cleveland Clinic

Andrea Walsh
President and CEO
Health Partners

Kenneth Holman
President and CEO
CentraCare

Barbara Joers
President and CEO
Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare

Janine J. Smith
Deputy General Counsel & VP
The Hershey Company

Douglas M. Baker, Jr.
Chairman and CEO
Ecolab

Maria Cino
Vice President, Americas
Hewlett Packard Enterprises

James C. Collins Jr.
Chief Executive Officer
Corteva Agriscience

Jennifer L. Sirangelo
President and CEO
National 4-H Council

Joan Gabel
President
University of Minnesota

Matthew D. Chase
CEO / Executive Director
National Association of Counties

Zippy Duvall
President
American Farm Bureau Federation

Rob Larew
President
National Farmers Union

Chuck Connor
President and CEO
National Council for Farmer Cooperatives

Barb Glenn
CEO
National Association of State Departments of Ag.

Shirley Bloomfield
CEO
NTCA – The Rural Broadband Assoc.

Jim Matheson
Chief Executive Officer
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

John Fluharty
Chairman
Power and Communications Contractors Association

Bobby Patrick, VI
Vice President, Strategic Growth and Policy
Medical Alley Association

Aaron Rudburg
Managing Director and COO
S2G Ventures

Brent Christensen
President and CEO
Minnesota Telecom Alliance

Rocky C. Weber
President and General Counsel
Nebraska Cooperative Council

Mary Kay Thatcher
Sr. Manager, Federal Government & Industry Relations
Syngenta

Jack Scott
Vice President Sustainability
Nestlé Purina PetCare

Dana Bailey
Director, State and Local Government Affairs
CenturyLink

Daniel Smith
President and CEO
Cooperative Network

Roger Watchhorn
Group Leader, Ag Supply Chain
Cargill

Jim Mulhurn
President and CEO
National Milk Producers Federation

Hunter Carpenter
Director of Public Policy
Ag Retailers Association

Lucas Sjostrom
Executive Director
Minnesota Milk

Vince Robinson
Chair
Minnesota Rural Broadband Assoc.

Matt Dunne
Founder and Executive Director
Center on Rural Innovation

Phil Blake
President
Bayer U.S.

Dave Holm
Executive Director
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives

Gary Wertish
President
Minnesota Farmers Union

Stephen G. Kaniewski
President and CEO
Valmont Industries, Inc.

Andrew W. LaVigne
President and CEO
American Seed Trade Association

Randall C. Gordon
President and CEO
National Grain and Feed Association

Gary B. Smith
President and CEO
Ciena Corporation

Jennifer Hatcher
Chief Public Policy Officer & Senior Vice President
FMI – The Food Industry Association

Howard K. Vincent
President and CEO
Pheasants Forever, Inc.

Adam Putnam
Chief Executive Officer
Ducks Unlimited

Michael Gomes
VP, Business Development
Topcon Agriculture

Dr. Steven Ommen
Associate Dean, Center for Connected Care
Mayo Clinic

Meg Villarreal
Manager of Policy & Public Affairs
Nestle

Geoff Freeman
President and CEO
Consumer Brands Association

ⁱ BroadbandNow Study released in February 2020: <https://broadbandnow.com/research/fcc-underestimates-unserved-by-50-percent>

ⁱⁱ Federal Communications Commission Study: *Improving the Nations Digital Infrastructure*:
https://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2017/db0119/DOC-343135A1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Department of Agriculture: *A Case for Rural Broadband*:
<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/case-for-rural-broadband.pdf>

^{iv} A Letter from 39 State Attorneys General: <https://coag.gov/app/uploads/2020/05/Final-NAAG-Letter-Broadband-Access.pdf>

^v A Letter to the President and Congressional Leadership from 11 of the Nation's Governors: <https://www.governor.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20200625-TWW-Governors-Congressional-Letter-on-Broadband.pdf>

^{vi} U.S. Chamber of Commerce Technology Engagement Center: <https://www.uschamber.com/co/good-company/launch-pad/digital-key-rural-american-economic-growth-amazon>

^{vii} United States Department of Agriculture: *A Case for Rural Broadband*:
<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/case-for-rural-broadband.pdf>