

LAND O' LAKES, INC.



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## A Letter to Our Nation's Governors

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April 15, 2020

Dear Governors:

On behalf of our collective organizations, which literally touch tens of thousands of communities and constituents across America and in every state, we write to applaud your leadership during these enormously unprecedented times. You all have had to make some incredibly tough decisions and we recognize your steady leadership has allowed our states to lead on the frontlines of this crisis.

As COVID-19 moves from urban to rural communities, as it undoubtedly will, we are gravely concerned. Perhaps even more than urban areas, rural communities are unprepared to mitigate the pandemic itself and adapt to what will certainly be a different world in a post COVID economy.

Many of you have heard from us previously about our collective concern about access to adequate internet connectivity in the rural areas of each and every state. Some 24 million Americans lack access to broadband internet connectivity, 19 million of whom reside in rural America. This means 40% of the nation's schools and 60% of healthcare facilities outside metropolitan areas lack internet connectivity. Imagine what that will mean to the impact of the virus in rural communities -- even more staggering impacts to economic, health, education, and social inequities.

Right now, the majority of Americans have shifted to working from home; schoolchildren are required to use distance learning platforms; and increasingly, patients are seeking telemedicine access to reduce pressure on the healthcare system and reduce risk of unnecessary exposure. None of these things are possible without connection.

Our organizations are working to do our part to connect the nation during the current crisis. In the spirit of community support, in as many states as is feasible and starting in Minnesota, we are offering free and open Wi-Fi access to local citizens for the next six weeks in proximity to many company and network locations, manufacturing facilities, hospitals and clinics along with other satellite business locations. We hope this service will allow families to stay connected, patients

without adequate home broadband to access telehealth platforms and kids to access their distance learning lessons. We invite you to partner with us to leverage our shared resources to pop up additional Wi-Fi locations across your states.

You can help by considering policies to help allow further telemedicine opportunities in your states, including:

- Expand access to telehealth services by including communications that consist of email, phone conversations, and platform and portal messaging in the definition of “telemedicine” and reiterating that insurers allow all means of delivering telehealth to be reimbursed at the same level as an in-person visit.
- Require that criteria to deliver services via telemedicine and related billing and documentation practices are not more burdensome or restrictive than those required of in-person visits. Allow for onsite supervision to include remote supervision between originating and distant sites.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, relax enforcement of regulations, rules or statutes that would require in-person examinations prior to prescription; and seek long-term changes where necessary.
- During this emergency, strengthen the workforce by permitting professionals from other states to provide care in your state in accordance with federal waivers and the waivers many other states have implemented.
- Consider issuing directives to conform to federal waivers related to the provision of telehealth and licensing and credentialing issues to expand access to providers.
- Adopt the same telemedicine practices and coverage that CMS is now allowing for Medicare beneficiaries.

It is clear we must connect every American to the internet. We ask for your help in securing internet for all. We urge you to do everything you can at the state level and join us in calling on our federal partners to do the same.

In these times, we need to work collaboratively and act boldly with clear purpose. We should look to the lessons of the past and weigh not only what we stand to gain but also what we cannot afford to lose.

We understand that in this time each of us must lead where we can, follow where we should and persevere because we must. This is a moment defined by action. Let’s connect the nation.

Sincerely,



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