



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.<sup>i</sup> 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](#)<sup>ii</sup> 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](#)<sup>iii</sup>, 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](#)<sup>iv</sup> and [Governors](#)<sup>v</sup> 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.”<sup>vi</sup>

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.<sup>vii</sup> 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](mailto: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

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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  
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NTCA – The Rural Broadband Assoc.

Jim Matheson  
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John Fluharty  
Chairman  
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Bobby Patrick, VI  
Vice President, Strategic Growth and Policy  
Medical Alley Association

Aaron Rudburg  
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Brent Christensen  
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Minnesota Telecom Alliance

Rocky C. Weber  
President and General Counsel  
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Mary Kay Thatcher  
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Jack Scott  
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Dana Bailey  
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Jim Mulhurn  
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Matt Dunne  
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Dave Holm  
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Gary Wertish  
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Stephen G. Kaniewski  
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Andrew W. LaVigne  
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American Seed Trade Association

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

Gary B. Smith  
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Jennifer Hatcher  
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Mayo Clinic

Meg Villarreal  
Manager of Policy & Public Affairs  
Nestle

Geoff Freeman  
President and CEO  
Consumer Brands Association

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

<sup>ii</sup> Federal Communications Commission Study: *Improving the Nations Digital Infrastructure*:  
[https://transition.fcc.gov/Daily\\_Releases/Daily\\_Business/2017/db0119/DOC-343135A1.pdf](https://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2017/db0119/DOC-343135A1.pdf)

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

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

<sup>v</sup> 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>

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

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