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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

February 7, 2022

The Honorable Mitch Landrieu
Senior Advisor to the President for Infrastructure Coordination
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Landrieu,

The landmark bipartisan infrastructure law provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity for deployment of high-speed, reliable broadband networks to millions of Americans who lack broadband access today. The legislation provides more than \$42 billion for broadband deployment grants to the states. As you begin the important task of coordinating the implementation of the infrastructure bill and ensuring accountability in this new spending, I urge you to prioritize working closely with states and localities on best practices to streamline the processes for broadband network buildout.

Although the amount of funding that will be distributed is a significant step toward connecting the unserved, money alone cannot solve the problems that exist in building and maintaining these networks, particularly in some of the hardest-to-serve areas. Deploying broadband typically requires access to rights of way and poles, historic and environmental reviews, and approval of a variety of applications and permits. Complicated and costly permitting requirements, lengthy approval timelines and other regulatory red tape can drastically slow deployment and, in many cases, deter investment. The sometimes-excessive fees associated with permitting can also add additional cost to a network buildout project, diverting funds away from physical infrastructure.

However, these various challenges can be overcome through several steps from the executive branch. A streamlined permitting and approval process would certainly expedite deployment of broadband. Having best practices in place before these funds are distributed would allow states and localities to focus their limited resources on cases where attention is most needed. In addition, reducing overall hurdles to deployment would ultimately speed the process of connecting Americans, who cannot afford to wait years for better quality broadband.

Providing states and localities with technical assistance, promoting the use of model codes, such as those developed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and prioritizing funding for projects that adhere to productive permitting processes are all ways to encourage the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars. I urge you to consider these and other options for ensuring infrastructure funding is put to the best possible use, allowing more Americans to get connected quickly and effectively. Having these streamlined processes in place is just as important to the

success of this undertaking as effective guardrails as the money is distributed to states. I look forward to working with you in this effort.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
United State Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, & Transportation