



November 18, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (“SHLB Coalition” or “SHLB”)¹ asks you to ensure that community anchor institutions are included in the broadband mapping legislation, H.R. 4229, the “Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) Act”.

Community anchor institutions – which include schools, libraries, health care providers, higher education, public safety and other community support organizations – provide essential services to their communities using broadband technologies. Schools use broadband for distance learning, and most teachers assign homework that requires students to use the Internet. Libraries provide no-fee Internet access to their patrons and often offer hot spot lending programs to their communities. Health care providers need high-capacity broadband to transmit medical images and electronic medical records, and to provide telemedicine services to rural residents. For these reasons, Goal #4 in the National Broadband Plan calls for anchor institutions to have gigabit broadband by the year 2020.²

Unfortunately, the needs of anchor institutions for high-quality broadband are sometimes overlooked. For instance, the FCC’s recent proposal to create a Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) repeatedly refers to “homes and small businesses” without any mention of anchor institutions.³

We support the DATA Act’s provisions that require the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to collect and disseminate granular broadband availability data to create coverage maps based on a serviceable location fabric map regarding fixed broadband. Unfortunately, the

¹ The SHLB Coalition is a broad-based coalition of 177 organizations that share the goal of promoting open, affordable, high-quality broadband for anchor institutions and their communities. SHLB Coalition members include representatives of schools, libraries, health care providers and networks, state broadband offices, private sector companies, state and national research and education networks, and consumer organizations. See <http://shlb.org/about/coalition-members> for a current list of SHLB Coalition members.

² <https://www.fcc.gov/general/national-broadband-plan>.

³ In re Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, WC Docket No. 19-126, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 19-77 (Rel. Aug. 2, 2019) available at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-19-77A1.pdf>.

DATA Act does not define the word “location”, which leaves open the possibility that anchor institutions could be left out of the FCC’s mapping effort. Our concern is that the needs of anchor institutions might be overlooked in the FCC’s implementation unless it receives specific direction from Congress. Including anchor institutions in this legislation would ensure that the FCC gathers and analyzes broadband data regarding anchor institution connectivity to help meet the National Broadband Plan Goal #4.

We urge you to include language to clarify the definition of “location” to ensure that the FCC collects and disseminates broadband data regarding community anchor institutions in addition to business and residential consumers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Windhausen, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Windhausen, Jr.
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cc:

The Honorable Mike Doyle
The Honorable Bob Latta
The Honorable Anna Eshoo