

Office of the Governor  
State of Louisiana

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January 10, 2023

Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel  
Federal Communications Commission  
45 L Street NE  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Alan Davidson, Administrator  
National Telecommunications and Information Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Administrator Davidson:

We greatly appreciate the sense of urgency that your respective agencies are taking to enable states in our collective efforts to eliminate the digital divide. Further we could not be more excited at the unprecedented level of Federal/State engagement that we have had over the past year. Proactively engaging states through regular conversations, webinars, assigning of federal program officers and being accessible has been critical. For this we are grateful.

As we approach 2023, we need to collectively maintain or even accelerate this level of urgency. Our citizens have a pressing need for affordable and reliable high-speed internet. Simply put, now is not the time to slow down. This past year, the FCC and NTIA have beaten their own internal deadlines in publishing the BEAD/Digital Equity NOFOs and the initial FCC availability maps. We have been impressed with the overall pace and quality of these federal efforts, especially given the scale and complexity of the underlying issues.

Thus, we are especially concerned about emerging calls for delay. In particular, we oppose any extension of the timeline for FCC mapping data challenges beyond the 13<sup>th</sup> of January and the corresponding NTIA BEAD Notice of Allocation announcement beyond the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. Such a delay would unnecessarily increase the acute broadband inequities that currently exist in our states and across the country. In particular, we are concerned that any such delay amounts to a penalty on those states that have been leading the way in getting organized, efficiently marshalling resources, and moving forward quickly to eliminate the digital divide.

In a letter that Governor Edwards wrote to Secretary Raimondo on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, 2022, we specifically asked for two items:

- Do Not Penalize Efficient States
- Fast Track Program Review

You have taken our suggestions seriously and are scaling up your own teams and operations to reflect the suggestions above.

Indeed, the importance of state input into the FCC mapping process has been clear since the enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act over a year ago and was addressed directly in NTIA's May 2022 BEAD NOFO. The FCC in fact fully detailed the rules for such challenges even earlier in January of 2021. Given this ample notice, there have been a number of states that heeded the advice and guidance from the FCC and NTIA to plan for challenges to both the fabric and service availability and either have already done so or are on track to easily meet the January 13, 2023 deadline.

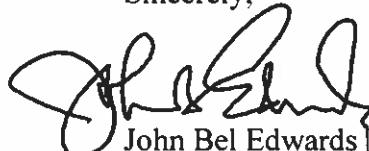
Many of these same states have already been approved for their BEAD/Digital Equity grants and work is well underway for detailed BEAD plans to close the digital divide for their citizens. In short, we find the current federal timelines to be fully adequate, and we urge you to maintain or even look for opportunities to accelerate the pace of progress.

If however, you do plan to delay the mapping challenge deadline which we would not encourage, we would suggest the following:

- NTIA should not extend the June.30, 2023 announcement of BEAD allocations
- Release the Initial minimum \$100 Million in state awards by March.30, 2023 and perhaps sooner for states that have already received approval for BEAD initial Planning funds

We look forward to working with you on the recommendations above and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



John Bel Edwards  
Governor