Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on "Legislating to Connect America: Improving the Nation's Broadband Maps"
September 11, 2019

This year, our Committee has focused on improving telecommunications services for consumers. In July, the House overwhelmingly passed the bipartisan Stopping Bad Robocalls Act, and earlier this year the House passed legislation that restores a free and open internet by reinstating net neutrality. And now this Subcommittee continues its work on a range of pro-consumer issues including broadband deployment, spectrum policy, supply chain security, and more.

Broadband mapping is a central component in each of those discussions. Without good maps, we cannot correctly determine how we should target funding for broadband access and adoption in rural and urban areas. Without good maps, we don't have enough detail to assess competition or review mergers. And without good maps, we don't have a proper view of whether the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is appropriately using its authority to benefit consumers.

It is not an exaggeration to say this FCC's terrible broadband data is its Achilles heel.

And the statistics show just how bad this problem is. Free Press recently discovered that one carrier alone was overstating its deployment by 2.2 million consumers, throwing off the FCC's entire estimate of unserved Americans.

CostQuest discovered as part of its state pilot program that as many as 38 percent of households in the study area might be unserved, but the FCC may count them as served.

This is a huge problem. Fortunately, there is bipartisan agreement on this Subcommittee that the FCC's bad maps need to be fixed. Last year, Representative Loebsack's Rural Wireless Access Act was signed into law, which aimed at fixing the FCC's wireless data. Unfortunately, the FCC hasn't yet taken the actions required by law due to the ongoing investigation into carriers intentionally submitting bad data as part of the Mobility Fund II proceeding.

It's clear that despite our past action more work needs to be done. I thank the many members who have worked hard to solve this problem.