

Chairwoman Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone,
thank you for hosting this Member Day –

And thank you for allowing me time to address you
and the Committee.

I know it is towards the end of the day –

So I will get right to it.

While Energy and Commerce’s jurisdiction is broad,
I would like to zero in on one issue of great
importance to my constituents –

Broadband internet access.

As a former Indiana State Senator, I worked
tirelessly to expand broadband and internet service
to rural communities across Indiana.

My district was one of the most unserved areas of
the state –

And I made it my mission to work toward access for all.

As this Committee understands –

Americans rely on internet access for telehealth services, to operate and grow their businesses, to connect to educational services, and for precision agriculture.

We must make sure that no matter where you choose to reside –

Whether it is in Indianapolis or Salem, Indiana –

You can have access to the global economy.

I'm on this mission as part of an effort to ensure rural areas of this country do not get left behind.

That is why in my former legislative role, I worked to pass legislation to prioritize broadband internet access to unserved communities **first**.

I'm proud of these efforts and Indiana's leadership in investing millions of dollars toward broadband deployment.

We are laser focused on connecting these areas of zero access and happy to report these actions are already making a difference.

Indiana's Broadband Ready Communities program and the Next Level Connections program are examples of success at the state level and as we continue our work –

It is important to ensure that Congress and our agencies are always a partner –

Not a hindrance –

To states trying to connect their citizens.

As a new member of Congress, Broadband connectivity issues continue to remain a focus.

That is why earlier this month I sent a letter to National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Administrator Davidson to express my concerns with their recent Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD) Program.

While I was pleased to see Indiana allocated approximately \$868 million in funding, the NOFO associated with these funds raises concerns for efficient deployment and as written, could result in expending vital funding resources for overbuilding in areas that already have access.

We have previously seen this happen when funds for broadband were provided to states during the Obama Administration and priorities did not require unserved areas to be connected first.

As the committee has likely recognized - the NOFO contains several sections related to labor requirements, mandates - specifically those related to affordability and rate regulation - as well as sections related to climate change and certain

supply chain and other issues that may unnecessarily slow deployment.

Like I said in my letter to the Administrator, our focus should be getting all Americans connected to the internet, utilizing a strategy that is focused on quickly and efficiently reaching the greatest number of homes for the least cost with an emphasis on providing adequate speeds and service.

We should not be enacting a political agenda that is out of touch with the needs of states, including my home state of Indiana. The NOFO in that regard is too prescriptive and full of leftist priorities, rather than placing an emphasis on efficient and thoughtful deployment.

Our job is simple – connect people to this vital service. There is no room for politics when it comes to connecting America. We should not be politicizing a program that has broad bipartisan support – end of story.

Additionally, Chairwoman Rodgers, I would like to thank your Committee staff for working with mine on ways to more effectively measure just how successful our various broadband programs are at connecting our constituents.

Since many of our broadband programs receive significant investments of taxpayer money, we have a responsibility to ensure that these investments are carried out responsibly.

Thank you, again, for allowing me the opportunity to speak on this issue today. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff on these efforts.

I yield back the balance of my time.