

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Member Yvette Clarke

***Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Hearing on “Examining Solutions to
Expedite Broadband Permitting”***

September 18, 2025

I have to start today by addressing the news of the day. After years of complaining about Jimmy Kimmel’s jokes, President Trump was finally successful in having the comedian taken off the air.

Now, Trump’s censorship campaign has been carried out by Chairman Brendan Carr at the Federal Communications Commission. In fact, this latest Kimmel situation was prompted by an explicit threat that Chairman Carr made on a right-wing podcast yesterday – that broadcasters that air Kimmel’s show can (and I’m quoting) “do this the easy way or the hard way” – deplatform Kimmel or face the consequences at the FCC. This is unprecedented, outrageous, and, above all, dangerous.

In the past, members of this Subcommittee, both Republican and Democrat, have been among the most vocal in calling out violations of the First Amendment. So I demand today, Mr. Chairman, that we convene an FCC oversight hearing immediately so we have an opportunity to hold Chairman Carr accountable for the way he has weaponized the FCC against free speech and expression.

With that, I will turn to the issue at hand. Fast, reliable, and affordable broadband internet is absolutely essential to modern life. It is the engine that powers most of our daily lives, and that’s why I am so disturbed that the Trump Administration is refusing to get broadband infrastructure funding out the door. It isn’t supposed to be optional. This is money that Congress wrote into law for our constituents, to make sure they have the broadband access they need, but the Trump Administration is choosing to deliberately delay and undermine the program – which would otherwise be putting shovels in the ground right now. It’s a betrayal to our communities and our states, who have been counting on the BEAD funding we promised them.

While I remain frustrated about the delays in BEAD funding, I am pleased that we have a handful of bipartisan bills before us today that would improve old and outdated permitting processes. It is no secret that some federal agencies operate according to archaic protocols that have slowed infrastructure deployment. Democrats are eager to work together with our Republican colleagues on bills to address these and other real shortcomings.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the bills do not address the most pressing barriers to infrastructure deployment. Many of them are just politics dressed up as policy, amounting to little more than backdoor attacks on important environmental protections.

Others would needlessly and wrongly undermine local, state, and tribal governments. For instance, the “shot clock” legislation before us today would impose arbitrary deadlines and one-size-fits-all mandates on local governments, ignoring basic sunshine laws that ensure constituents have a say in local decisions. I cannot support efforts like these, which would steamroll mayors and town councils in the communities we serve, and strip our constituents of their right to be heard.

If my Republican colleagues really want to remove barriers to broadband deployment, they should consider legislation to provide federal, state, local, and tribal partners with the resources they need to get the job done. Passing a bill here in Washington that simply tells local and tribal governments to not only do more, but to do it more quickly and with less, is simply not a real solution.

The truth is, no amount of permitting reform can make up for the damage the Trump Administration is actively doing to broadband deployment by delaying the BEAD program, which should have broken ground at the beginning of the year. Instead, Commerce Secretary Lutnick has imposed further delays and forced states to restart their work from scratch. The result is that nine months later, no shovels are in the ground and there are fiber optic cables in the warehouse, collecting dust. Now, entire communities will remain disconnected and unable to access broadband internet.

The Trump Administration is also poised to spend billions of dollars to subsidize inferior service options like satellite, which every American can already access today.

Low earth orbit satellite broadband service, like Elon Musk’s Starlink, is the main beneficiary of Secretary Lutnick’s meddling with the BEAD program. But federal investments in broadband deployment are meant to build infrastructure to communities that the private sector has not reached. It appears Secretary Lutnick’s plan is to saddle communities with the cheapest service available so that he and President Trump can illegally – claw back tens of billions of broadband dollars that were promised to our states.

I yield back the balance of my time.