



BROADBAND
WITHOUT
BOUNDARIES

June 3, 2025

The Honorable Howard W. Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

via U.S. Mail

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

The NTIA BEAD program was established to reach every American with reliable broadband—particularly in the challenging rural areas that remain unserved. With the resources allocated under the IIJA, the nation has an historic opportunity to bridge the digital divide with the tools needed to get the job done right.

We know you are hearing from many BEAD stakeholders urging you to move quickly, warning that we have waited long enough and cannot afford further delay. We share that sense of urgency because unserved communities should not have to wait even longer. But this type of haste only serves to perpetuate the flaws in BEAD's original design.

As you continue to evaluate the objectives of BEAD, getting it *right*—not just getting it *done*—should be the Department's guiding principle. We ask that you remain focused on what Congress intended and specifically called for in BEAD's bipartisan authorizing legislation: a *technology-neutral* approach that maximizes reach, minimizes cost, and invites innovation.

Taking the time to make BEAD better need not lead to indefinite delays. However, taking time to ensure the program is efficient and tailored to meet the actual goal Congress set out for ubiquitous, technology neutral broadband availability is commendable. WISPA is encouraged by your Department's efforts to be a responsible steward of taxpayers' dollars by not wasting money on overbuilding existing networks; respecting the private investments small businesses have made in an effort to close the digital divide without government assistance; removing unnecessary programmatic, administrative and regulatory barriers that may deter or disqualify those very same smaller providers that are already delivering broadband in these difficult markets; and resisting pressure to mandate a single technology as the default solution.



Page 2

The key to BEAD's success is to allow every *viable* technology to be part of the solution. While optical fiber is a remarkable technology, and many of WISPA's members deploy it extensively, NTIA must not allow fiber preferences to become a blunt policy instrument used to exclude all other alternatives, ballooning costs and deployment timetables and undermining the very ingenuity BEAD requires to succeed.

Some stakeholders have suggested that BEAD should now be expedited by delegating to the expertise found in the states. We believe the greatest opportunity to leverage expertise also requires the inclusion of service providers who are already active in the space. Fixed wireless broadband providers have long been working to bring reliable broadband service to rural communities. Yet until very recently, these providers were largely programmatically excluded from participating in BEAD. Comprised mostly of small businesses that are the lifeblood of the American economy, WISPA's members serve millions of Americans in rural and remote communities, deploying a mix of technologies—fiber, wireless, and hybrid models—tailored to the real-world conditions they face. They stand ready to deliver even more. The key is to give states even more tools and guidance to make policy choices that allow every *viable* solution to be part of the answer.

We are grateful for NTIA's thoughtfulness in evaluating next steps for BEAD. WISPA members are hopeful, and anxious to deliver solutions to the digital divide. WISPA is encouraged by your efforts to restore BEAD to Congress' original intent, unleashing the power of all technologies and providers. Let us build a broadband future that works for *all* Americans, using *all* the tools available.

WISPA stands ready to help make that happen, and we appreciate your commitment to getting it right. If you have any questions on how we can help BEAD succeed, feel free to reach out to me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, appearing to read "David M. Zumwalt", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

David M. Zumwalt
President & CEO

Cc: The Honorable Adam Cassady
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Deputy Administrator, NTIA
via email to acassady@ntia.gov