

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 15, 2016

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

As you know, closing the Digital Divide on Tribal Lands (including Alaska Native Villages and Native Hawaiian Homelands) remains one of the most important infrastructure challenges facing our nation. New mobile broadband technologies are improving virtually every aspect of our economy, including medical monitoring, assisting first responders with real-time video capabilities, and providing countless mobile applications to our citizens. Despite significant gains, broadband availability and adoption on Tribal Lands continues to lag behind non-Tribal Lands in the U.S. by a wide margin, especially in rural areas.

Over the past several months, you have spoken of the Commission's intent to undertake comprehensive Tribal reforms. We ask you to complete such reforms this year, to improve infrastructure, increase access to broadband, and to make high quality mobile broadband affordable for Tribal citizens. To the extent that funds are available within the current universal service program, we urge you to repurpose them to accelerate investment in broadband on Tribal Lands.

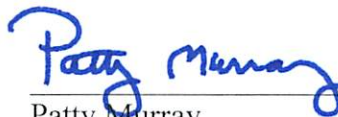
Separately, we ask you to improve the quality of the Commission's data, for both mobile wireless coverage and mobile broadband availability, to ensure that the Commission's Mobility Fund investments are properly targeted to areas that need new and improved services. As new "5G" mobile technologies appear on the horizon, we cannot allow Tribal Lands, especially those in rural areas, to fall farther behind.

Prompt action on these critical issues is needed to ensure that every American has access to the benefits of modern mobile broadband service at affordable rates.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator