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February 12th, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I am writing to inquire about the status of broadband deployment in Missouri resulting from the Connect America Fund Phase II (CAF II) auction.

The need for access to reliable broadband internet in rural areas of Missouri is critical. The latest data from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) shows 45% of residents in rural parts of my state do not have access to a wired broadband service.¹ Missouri ranked 41st in the country for its limited connectivity.² I hear regularly from Missourians who are concerned that their communities are being left behind.

In August of 2018, the FCC announced a CAF II award of more than \$254 million to deploy broadband to over 95,000 locations in Missouri with the goal of bringing high speed internet to rural communities that need it most.³ In the wake of the final authorizations to distribute these funds, the real work of connecting Missouri is set to begin by the companies receiving these resources. The majority of these funds went to one company, Wisper ISP Inc, which received \$176 million to build in Missouri, one of the largest such awards in the country. The size of this award warrants oversight regarding the company's ability to fulfill their commitments.

As you and the FCC work in the coming months to administer programs to support rural broadband development, I ask that you answer the questions from many of my constituents who eagerly await services:

- Can you provide a specific project update on Wisper ISP Inc's deployment of service in Missouri?

¹ Federal Communications Commission. (2018, December). *Area Summary*. Retrieved from Fixed Broadband Deployment Data: <https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/#/>

² Reese, N. (2020, January 08). Missouri internet service providers: availability & coverage. Retrieved from <https://broadbandnow.com/Missouri>

³ Federal Communications Commission. (2018, August 28). *State Results Summary*. Retrieved from Connect America Fund Phase II Auction: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-18-887A3.pdf>

- How many locations out of the more than 60,000 awarded to Wisper ISP, Inc has the company added service to since notification of their award in 2018?
- How does the quality of the services added at these locations compare to the quality commitments made by Wisper ISP, Inc?
- How does the buildout of Wisper ISP, Inc's services compare to their original project timeline shared with the FCC? Are they on track?
- What oversight will your agency conduct and what reporting requirements are in place to ensure Wisper ISP, Inc. is making sufficient progress toward their obligation?
- What safeguards exist to ensure that the funding provided to Wisper ISP, Inc. is not wasted and can be rescinded and reallocated in order to meet the FCC's broadband access benchmarks for rural Missouri?
- Will the locations won by Wisper ISP, Inc. that are not yet receiving service be considered eligible for funding through the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund?

You have made your commitment to closing the digital divide clear. I, along with all Missourians, look forward to your answers and to seeing these funds deployed quickly and efficiently to the areas that need them most. Please respond to these questions no later than Wednesday, February 19, 2020.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator

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