



The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

May 27, 2021

Dear Secretary Yellen,

As cofounders of [Focus on Rural America](#) – a nonprofit organization dedicated to highlighting the economic issues that matter most to rural Americans– we write in support of the [Interim Final Rule](#) recently issued by the Department of the Treasury which, during the implementation of the Coronavirus State and Local Recovery Funds established under the American Rescue Plan Act, would define unserved or underserved areas as those lacking access to a wireline connection capable of reliably delivering minimum speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload (commonly referred to as 25/3).

[More than 14 million Americans](#), a significant number of whom live in rural areas, still lack access to high quality, reliable broadband. Without broadband connectivity, these Americans have fewer opportunities for education, work, telehealth, and other services they need to compete and thrive in today's world. As the former Lieutenant Governor of Iowa and former Chief of Staff to Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), we are keenly aware of the need for rural communities, like those in Iowa, to have access to the same resources and opportunities as suburban and urban areas. Failing to prioritize these communities would increase the disparities they face, making it nearly impossible for them to recruit talent and workers to their communities, retain doctors and nurses, and hire the best and brightest teachers for rural students. Bringing more rural families online is integral to empowering students, the rural workforce and all unserved families.

By defining unserved or underserved areas as those unable to reliably deliver minimum speeds of 25/3 Mbps, the Interim Final Rule ensures that government funding first reaches truly unserved households and businesses that have historically been left behind. It is critical these unserved communities are given a chance to catch up before investments are diverted to locations currently served by minimum speeds of 100/20. Without this definition, chronically unserved rural communities of students, businesses, and farmers who currently have no access would continue struggle.

The provisions in this Interim Final Rule present a significant opportunity to connect more Americans quickly. Focus on Rural America commends you for this smart action and fully supports your efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with our government partners to ensure more rural Americans can access the broadband services they need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Patty Judge".

Patty Judge
Co-Founder, Focus on Rural America

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeff Link".

Jeff Link
Co-Founder, Focus on Rural America