United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 1, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

As we enter 2018, there is broad agreement that investments in infrastructure are a critical component of strengthening our economy and promoting growth. Accordingly, we await the opportunity to review the Administration's infrastructure plan and remain hopeful that there is common ground for us to work together to improve our nation's crumbling infrastructure.

In an increasingly interconnected world and global economy, we must include in our discussion of infrastructure not just roads, bridges and waterways, but also high-speed internet access. While the vast majority of Americans have access to high-speed internet service, there is a stark disparity between urban and rural America. This digital divide puts many rural Americans at risk of being left out of critical technological advancements and economic gains. The longer we delay investing in quality telecommunications for rural residents, the more challenging it will become to bridge the digital divide. As you finalize your proposal to invest in our nation's infrastructure, we urge you to include at least $40 billion in funding for broadband deployment to help reach unserved Americans in rural and remote areas.

According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 2016 Broadband Progress Report, 10 percent of Americans lack access to high-speed internet in their homes. While that figure has been improving over time, it obscures a troubling statistic: the profound gap in access between Americans who live in rural and urban areas. While only 4 percent of urban Americans lack access to fixed broadband, 39 percent of Americans who live in rural areas—23 million people—lack access to high-speed broadband. For Americans living on rural tribal lands, the statistics are even bleaker, with 68 percent of people lacking access to broadband. If we intend to ensure that all Americans have access to broadband, we must make rural communities a priority for high-speed internet access.

The United States has always been at the forefront of technological innovation and the digital economy. But when almost 40 percent of our rural citizens lack broadband access and children grow up in households without access to the internet, we jeopardize the ability of our citizens to meaningfully participate in the civic and economic life of our country. As a nation we have long understood the importance of promoting access to advanced technologies, from electricity to telephone service to broadband, and we have long recognized the role that government plays in supporting the deployment of those critical services. We must continue working to ensure that no American is left without access to technology that has become integral to daily life.

As you prepare your infrastructure plan, we urge you to include funding to support broadband deployment to connect families, facilities and businesses in unserved rural areas across the country. We look forward to working with you to promote investments in quality telecommunications infrastructure for rural America.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator