



May 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer & Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing all aspects of the U.S. information & communications industry, we are writing to request that as you consider policy priorities to maintain economic stability and stimulate growth throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, you provide appropriation funding for implementation of the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act (Public Law 116-124) (“the Act”). Funding for this law is critical to ensuring continued connectivity, consumer well-being, and addressing national security concerns identified by the government.

The Act was unanimously passed by Congress and signed into law on March 12, 2020. At its core, the law is designed to enhance the security and domestic resiliency of U.S. telecommunications networks and the businesses and consumers that rely on them. As you know, there are a number of wireless and wireline operators in the U.S. who deployed equipment from the Chinese vendors Huawei and ZTE. Since this “covered” equipment was deployed, the U.S. government has determined it poses an unacceptable risk to U.S. national security. Operating in high cost and rural areas, these small U.S. operators lack the resources required to replace the equipment covered by the law. The law creates a program designed to reimburse operators with fewer than two million customers for the cost of removing such equipment and replacing it.

Desire to fund the Act has widespread support. Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai included a request for funding for this important program through “a 5G supply chain fund to support the resiliency of our domestic telecommunications systems” in a letter to appropriators earlier this year. Chairman Pai’s request was to “[s]timulate U.S. telecom companies to replace Huawei & ZTE equipment & service in their networks,” and seeks \$2 billion for the program and \$5 million for administrative costs. We support Chairman Pai’s request to fully fund this important program.

National Security

Funding for implementation of the Act is more urgent now than ever. The U.S. government has determined that this equipment poses national security risks, yet until funding is available, operators with this equipment do not have the financial resources to initiate the process to remove and replace it.

Importance of Telecommunications Networks

Our telecommunications networks have never been more important than they are today. Our members have seen significant increases in network traffic reflecting seismic shifts across critical aspects of day-to-day life, as economic, educational, health, and social connections move online for us to stay connected while apart. Our networks are a lifeline for our economy and our personal connections. Preserving and expanding access to broadband is a critical economic driver. However, operators who through no fault of their own previously deployed Huawei and ZTE equipment are paralyzed. In rural areas, where these operators may be the only source of service, their ability to continue providing high-quality services may be jeopardized if they do not have the necessary resources to “rip and replace” existing covered equipment.

Job Creation

Finally, with our unemployment rate at record levels, we must use every opportunity to create jobs. Funding the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act does just that. Tower technicians and field construction crews, among others, will play important roles in both the deployment of the trusted equipment and services and the removal of existing covered equipment.

As an industry, we proudly work to ensure that America’s telecommunications networks are secure and resilient in all parts of the country. To assist in this endeavor, we strongly encourage you to include provisions in any upcoming legislation to fully fund the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Reimbursement Program. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Steven K. Berry
President & CEO
Competitive Carriers Association

Jason Oxman
President and CEO
Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)

David Stehlin
Chief Executive Officer
Telecommunications Industry Association

Kelly Worthington
Executive Vice President
WTA — Advocates for Rural Broadband

Cinnamon Rogers
Executive Vice President, Advocacy
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Shirley Bloomfield
Chief Executive Officer
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Jonathan S. Adelstein
President and Chief Executive Officer
Wireless Infrastructure Association

cc:

Chairman Roger Wicker

Chairman Richard Shelby

Chairman Frank Pallone

Chairwoman Nita Lowey

Ranking Member Maria Cantwell

Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy

Republican Leader Greg Walden

Ranking Member Kay Granger