Policymakers Must Ensure that Broadband is Reliable, Resilient, and Meets Consumer Needs

Slow or unreliable broadband that is riddled with restrictions (such as data caps) can be incredibly frustrating for consumers, and almost as bad as not having broadband available at all. Slow internet prevents households with two students from taking online classes at the same time, and data caps can force families to choose who can use the internet, when, and how often. Connection difficulties can even be a matter of life or death, preventing consumers from receiving emergency information, contacting loved ones, or navigating road closures during a crisis. In order to ensure that consumers have high-quality broadband, Congress and the administration must:

- **Promote Network Reliability**: Network reliability means that your phone and internet will work when you need it to. However, networks aren't always reliable because telecommunications carriers often choose to cut costs instead of investing in strengthening their networks. To promote reliability, policymakers should hold companies liable for prolonged outages, allow localities to craft reliability rules that are sensible for them, and mandate that providers have 72 hours of on-site backup power for communications infrastructure so that *power* outages don't lead to *communications* outages. Additionally, policymakers should ensure consumers have access to information about network reliability by collecting data about the length and breadth of network outages, and by measuring data against metrics outlined by the FCC.
- **Promote Network Resiliency:** Network resiliency means that a network is revived quickly after an outage. Policymakers can ensure networks aren't down for long by requiring providers to adhere to the Wireless Resiliency Cooperative Framework and to participate in emergency alerts (both of which are currently voluntary).
- **Soley Fund Future-Proof Networks:** Consumers are demanding faster speeds and lower latency more than ever before. However, the FCC only requires new networks be built at speeds of 25/3 Mbps. The FCC should continually increase its benchmark speed so multiple members of a household can engage in high-bandwidth activities simultaneously. Absent this approach, we will continue to fund networks that will be outdated before they are built.
- **Empower the FCC to Regulate Broadband**: Currently, internet service providers are free to undertake a number of actions, such as retiring older copper lines without notifying consumers and businesses, that prior to the Trump administration's abdication of its responsibilities would have been subject to regulatory oversight. Such regulatory oversight and authority is intended to protect consumers and promote broadband access. Providers are also free to block online content, throttle speeds, impose data caps, and give preferential treatment to some websites over others because the FCC abdicated its ability to regulate broadband. Policymakers must ensure that the FCC can regulate broadband and should also enact rules prohibiting broadband providers from blocking, throttling, or offering paid prioritization. Empowering the FCC to regulate

broadband is key to allowing the FCC to take other actions recommended in this document.

- **Prohibit Data Caps**: Data caps limit how often consumers can go online and what they can do while online. In order to prevent consumers from having to make difficult choices, like deciding between attending a virtual meeting or letting their children attend online classes, policymakers must prevent internet service providers from imposing data caps. Likewise, because mobile plans are more likely to have data caps, the FCC should promote the ability for everyone to have fixed broadband access at home.
- **Collect Quality of Service Data**: The FCC must collect data about the speeds and latency consumers experience so that consumers can know if they are getting the broadband access they're paying for -- and so policymakers can take action if they are not.