



April 21, 2020

**Via Email**

Chairman Ajit V. Pai  
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly  
Commissioner Brendan Carr  
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
Commissioner Geoffrey Starks

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**Board of Directors**

Roanne Robinson-Shaddox, Chair  
Barbara Poley, Vice Chair  
Gerad Godfrey, Treasurer  
Edyael Casaperalta, Secretary  
Brian Brashier, Member  
Joaqlin Estus, Member  
Danae Wilson, Member

**President/CEO**

Loris Taylor

**Re: AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES**

Dear Chairman Pai and Commissioners:

Native Public Media urges the Commission to expand the affordability and availability of communication services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 is an information centric crises and families across Indian Country are in desperate need for information from hospitals, law enforcement, hazard management, and governments to keep up with changing protocols and directives in order to remain safe and healthy.

Tribal communities, among the most remote and isolated communities, highlight the pressing need for high quality fixed and mobile voice and broadband services. These services help Tribal citizens stay connected in order to work, access telehealth and educational services, and participate in civic events like Census 2020, as they social distance, stay-at-home, and shelter-in.

As you may have learned from the news, Indian Country has been hit hard by COVID-19. To that regard, the Commission must do more to make broadband access more affordable and universal during this pandemic and as part of the Nation's long-term recovery process.

We urge the Commission to a) encourage Internet Service Providers to offer subsidized or free broadband to Native radio and television stations, Tribal governments, first responders, hospitals, and other essential anchor institutions that are essential and vital to Tribal citizens during this crises and in post COVID-19 recovery; b) increase broadband speeds and enable unlimited voice calling and text messaging for Lifeline customers now; c) suspend all fixed and mobile broadband data caps and usage overage charges for Americans; and d) increase broadband deployment to Indian Country that includes residential connectivity.

NPM thanks the FCC for temporarily granting the Navajo Nation use of the 2.5 GHz band to provide wireless broadband service on the reservation during the pandemic. We urge the Commission to grant all American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages the same opportunity and to propose permanent solutions to Indian Country's glaring digital divide.

In closing, Native Public Media appreciates the Commission's efforts to warn against cybersecurity issues and COVID-19 related scams. We also thank the Commission for its waiver of E-rate program rules so that WIFI hot spots for students can be distributed; especially in places where Internet access at home is not available or affordable.

Sincerely,

Loris Taylor  
President & CEO  
Native Public Media