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Thursday, April 5, 2018

The Honorable Kerry Benninghoff  
House Republican Policy Chairman  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Room 147 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Chairman Benninghoff,

Thank you for inviting Microsoft to participate in this policy hearing on broadband access in rural Pennsylvania.

Around 20 million people living in rural America lack access to broadband, with around 800,000 of them living here in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These people are unable to take advantage of the economic and educational opportunities enjoyed by their fellow citizens who have access. As an example, according to the FCC, approximately 70% of teachers in the US assign homework and research requiring broadband access, but 5 million students still lack broadband access at home, placing them at a severe disadvantage. We've witnessed progress in recent years, but high costs, the absence of new and alternative technologies, and market and regulatory conditions have all impeded further progress.

In early July 2017, Microsoft President and Chief Legal Officer Brad Smith launched a rural broadband strategy we're calling Airband with the attached white paper. Through projects around the world, we've connected nearly 200,000 people to the Internet and by July 4, 2022, Microsoft will partner with telecommunications and broadband providers across the US to connect 2 million rural Americans to broadband. Our goal is not to enter the telecommunication or broadband businesses ourselves, but we will invest in these partnerships by providing a combination of upfront capital offsets and technology expertise without profiting ourselves.

We look forward to engaging in this conversation with you and others in the Commonwealth today and the months to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay Summerson". The signature is stylized and cursive.