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Executive Director

Stephanie Mash Sykes, Esq.

July 25, 2018

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Letter in Support of The AIRWAVES Act (S.1682; H.R.4953)

The African American Mayors Association (AAMA) writes in support of The AIRWAVES Act (S.1682; H.R.4953), the bicameral legislation from Sens. Gardner and Hassan and Reps. Lance and Doyle, which provides for enhanced wireless service in rural and other underserved communities.

AAMA was established in 2014 to represent the over 500 African American mayors across the United States. AAMA is a premier not-for-profit organization focused on empowering African American mayors in their communities, and elevating their collective voice on the national stage. Throughout the year, AAMA brings member mayors together with the nation’s top thought leaders to discuss best practices and advance policy objectives on issues such as the future of work, building smart cities, trade, and criminal justice reform. More information can be found on the AAMA website at www.OurMayors.org.

The AIRWAVES Act is in direct alignment with one of the key tenants of AAMA’s mission, which is providing innovative solutions to cities across the country. As we support the reallocation of spectrum for wireless uses, we appreciate the bill’s provisions to protect incumbent users, such as broadcasters, who provide important services to rural and low-income communities. In addition to voicing our support to this bicameral legislation, AAMA’s Board of Trustees have also passed related policy resolutions in support of (i) making more spectrum available to ensure that all students have access to the Internet to complete homework assignments; and (ii) local infrastructure development that includes robust wireless access through modernized siting rules. Both related resolutions are enclosed.

The AIRWAVES Act will help ensure that our cities are leaders in 5G, spur economic growth in industries of the future such as telehealth, support local start-up communities, and help our rural communities. Thank you for your bipartisan leadership and we look forward to working with you to advance and pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Mash Sykes, Esq.
Executive Director
African American Mayors Association

**CC: Senate Commerce Committee Members
Enc: Resolutions**

Resolution Urging the Federal Communications Commission to Modernize the Lifeline Program to Address the Homework Gap

WHEREAS, the African American Mayors Association supports policies that help to close the digital divide and make it easier for low-income households with school-age children to have access to broadband Internet, and

WHEREAS, research suggests roughly seven in ten teachers assign homework that requires access to the Internet, and

WHEREAS, minority and low-income students are at a disadvantage without online access in order to do school work, and

WHEREAS, Pew Research analysis of the Census data finds that the lowest-income households have the lowest home broadband subscription rates, and

WHEREAS, according to Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data, there are 29 million households with school-aged children nationwide and approximately 5 million of those households do not have high-speed internet service at home, and

WHEREAS, low-income households – and especially black and Hispanic ones – make up a disproportionate share of that 5 million, and

WHEREAS, roughly one-third (31.4%) of households whose incomes fall below \$50,000 and with children ages 6 to 17 do not have a high-speed internet connection at home, and

WHEREAS, for many low-income students, wireless broadband is their only means of access to the Internet, and

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has initiated a rule-making process to overhaul the Lifeline Program, an initiative that subsidizes telephone subscriptions for low-income households, so that it would also cover broadband.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, AAMA urges the FCC to modernize its Lifeline Program to allow participants to choose between applying the same support to either voice or broadband Internet service, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, AAMA urges the FCC to make spectrum for wireless broadband more readily available so that there are more opportunities for students to get their school work done.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, the Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission, and other federal, state, and local government officials, as appropriate.

Resolution Encouraging the Support of Infrastructure Buildout to Pave the Pathway for Next Generation Networks

WHEREAS, the African American Mayors Association (AAMA) advocates for policies that increase the vitality and sustainability of our cities; and

WHEREAS, the AAMA recognizes the important role that mobile broadband access plays in creating economically sustainable communities of color; and

WHEREAS, the AAMA recognizes that the next generation of mobile connectivity increases network reliability, reduces latency, provides consumers and businesses with higher speeds, and is capable of serving a greater number of wireless devices than current technology; and

WHEREAS, to ensure the success of next generation technology, wireless carriers will have to deploy small antenna infrastructure connected via wireline fiber facilities; and

WHEREAS, the AAMA recognizes next generation signals cover shorter distances thus requiring several times as many smaller cells than traditional cell towers and that next generation networks work only if deployed intensively; and

WHEREAS, in order for next generation networks to have maximum impact for consumers that wireless carriers, state and local governments must work together to encourage deployment of this technology.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMA affirms local government's role in balancing the deployment of new generation wireless technology with local governments' role in managing rights-of-way, maintaining safe communities, and promoting economic development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the AAMA urges local governments to work collaboratively with businesses to bring next generation networks to their cities.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and United States Senate, the Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission, and other federal, state and local government officials as appropriate.