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September 19, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

Thank you for your strong leadership in addressing long-overdue reforms to the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. Your efforts, alongside those of President Trump, will ensure that taxpayer dollars are well spent and provide real results for the millions of Americans who lack internet access across the country.

Internet access is an essential part of our daily lives. Yet, according to the Arkansas State Broadband Office (ARConnect), 120,000 homes and businesses across the Natural State lack access to broadband. This means thousands of Arkansans are cut off from essential services and economic development. In an increasingly connected world, this digital divide places rural and unserved communities at a severe disadvantage.

As you know, Congress appropriated \$42.45 billion to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to administer BEAD with the goal of expanding high-speed internet access and bridging the digital divide through funding planning, infrastructure deployment and adoption programs.

Passed under the Biden Administration and a Democratically-led Congress, BEAD lacked serious input from Republicans and included burdensome mandates such as unnecessary labor and climate change requirements, and backdoor rate regulation of internet providers. As a result, nearly four years later, not a single American has been connected to the internet under BEAD, according to NTIA data. However, now that BEAD has been enacted, I am committed to ensuring its funds are properly deployed, in accordance with the law, and in a timely manner with Arkansans and others in mind.

Arkansas has been a leader on BEAD deployment. Prior to your June 2025 BEAD Restructuring Policy Notice, Arkansas was one of only 38 states to have reached stage 7 out of 9 in the NTIA/BEAD process, having officially submitted proposals to NTIA.¹ In addition, Arkansas recognized the many bureaucratic hurdles created through the Biden administration's design of BEAD and did their best to reduce these burdens and streamline every aspect of the process it could. Though our state faced challenges, the result of building a program around these principles was strong provider participation and a cost-efficient outcome.

I wish to underscore that under the Biden Administration, the implementation of BEAD was unacceptably delayed by overregulation and the exclusion of Republican input, which held back crucial progress when Americans were waiting for broadband access. As a result of these delays, some communities that initially qualified under BEAD have now fallen outside of eligibility due to shifting timelines and criteria.

Looking ahead, I hope that future telecommunications infrastructure programs will permanently incorporate the June 6, 2025, reforms you instituted, specifically the elimination of undue and burdensome mandates such as fiber-only bias, climate, labor requirements, and rate regulation, in order to ensure future programs have the most cost-effective outcomes for taxpayers. By preserving a technology-neutral, business positive, streamlined approach from the outset, we can avoid repeating the costly mistakes of the past and extend broadband access more quickly and efficiently.

As such, I am grateful for your June 2025 Policy Notice, which finally eliminated the Biden-era red tape that drove up costs and delayed deployment. By removing non-statutory requirements such as climate mandates, labor quotas, and hidden rate regulations, you have restored BEAD to its statutory intent of technology-neutral, cost-efficient broadband expansion.

For Arkansas, these changes mean more than \$275 million in savings compared to the old framework and over \$200 million in provisional awards to Arkansas-based companies—proof that when bureaucracy is cut, competition thrives, and taxpayers win. In Arkansas' Benefit of the Bargain Round, Arkansas received 730 applications from 33 internet service providers (ISPs) with an average of 3.1 bids per eligible location.²

1- National Telecommunications and Information Administration. (2024, September 30). Biden-Harris administration approves Arkansas' "Internet for All" initial proposal. BroadbandUSA <https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/news/latest-news/biden-harris-administration-approves-arkansas-internet-all-initial-proposal>

2- Arkansas State Broadband Office. (2025, August 25). *The Arkansas BEAD Program*. Arkansas Department of Commerce – Broadband. [Arkansas.gov](https://broadband.arkansas.gov/bead/). Retrieved from the Arkansas BEAD webpage <https://broadband.arkansas.gov/bead/>

I also commend your decision to be technology neutral and put cost effectiveness first. Thanks to your reforms, low-Earth-orbit satellites, licensed fixed wireless, and hybrid models can now compete on equal terms with fiber so long as they meet BEAD's performance standard. This technology-neutral approach will accelerate buildout, especially in hard-to-reach rural areas. For Arkansas, as well, this BEAD reform allowed Arkansas to have preliminary selections that cover 100% of eligible locations. These preliminary selections included a wide range of technologies, including 76% fiber, 1% hybrid, 7% fixed wireless, and 16% low-Earth-orbit (LEO) satellite, improving cost-effectiveness and access.

As you continue your work, I ask that you look at the work of states like Arkansas and recognize their commitment to deliver for the thousands of Arkansans who lack internet access, despite the many flaws of the original BEAD program. Their work shows that when BEAD is focused on market-driven, competitive outcomes, delivering for the millions of Americans who lack internet access is possible. Thank you for your leadership on this issues, and for the impact it will have on hundreds of thousands of Arkansans.

President Trump and your team at NTIA deserve congratulations for taking decisive action to fix what the Biden Administration got wrong. Under your leadership, BEAD is finally positioned to connect underserved communities efficiently, affordably, and in line with free-market principles while avoiding wasteful government spending.

Again, I welcome your efforts to reform this flawed program and look forward to working with you and President Trump on delivering broadband access efficiently, affordably, and without further delay. Should our offices be of assistance to you during this process, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



French Hill
Member of Congress