



**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR**

December 17, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Arielle Roth
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick and Administrator Roth,

North Carolina appreciates the commitment of the Department of Commerce and the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA) to ensuring the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program delivers on its mission of achieving high-speed broadband access throughout the United States. With our Final Proposal submitted and provisional awards already announced, North Carolina is moving quickly to expand broadband access to thousands of unserved and underserved homes and businesses across the state. We are eager to begin those projects but also recognize that with its remaining non-deployment funds, the BEAD program has the potential to deliver much more. I write today to respectfully urge you to provide flexibility in how states can use these funds, consistent with the statute.

In BEAD, Congress made an important departure from prior federal broadband programs, most notably by putting states in the driver's seat in determining how the funds can best be utilized to bridge the digital divide in our communities. In North Carolina, we have identified a number of critical initiatives that will allow us to build upon the initial BEAD deployment projects to fully realize universal connectivity, drive innovation, and improve the economic opportunities and well-being of the people of this state. These are the kinds of initiatives that North Carolina seeks to jumpstart using our remaining allocated BEAD funds:

- **Newly identified unserved and underserved locations.** The Federal Communications Commission's most recent broadband availability map has identified new unserved and underserved locations that will not be connected through the BEAD program or any other current broadband funding program. North Carolina alone has more than 21,000 of these locations, which were either not included in earlier versions of the FCC fabric, had a change in availability status as reported by providers, were part of an awarded project that had a reduction in locations, or were areas in which awarded Rural Digital Opportunity Fund

providers defaulted. We would like to use remaining BEAD dollars to reach as many of these locations as possible, consistent with the statute and program guidelines.

- **Infrastructure resiliency and redundancy.** Hurricane Helene destroyed more than 1,700 miles of fiber optic cables, and 200,000 internet and phone line customers lost connection as a result of the storm. To sustain progress in expanding high-speed internet access, we must ensure that our critical communications infrastructure is resilient, prepared for future natural disasters, and has redundancy to avoid communications blackouts.
- **Online Safety and Cybersecurity.** As communications infrastructure and tools have become increasingly critical for a wide variety of purposes, they have also become a target for cybercriminals and rogue actors. Investment in security across the state will ensure a more reliable network for individuals, businesses, and governments throughout North Carolina.
- **Artificial Intelligence Infrastructure and Education.** North Carolina is eager to play a meaningful role in ensuring that the United States is the global leader in AI innovation. Focused investments in AI infrastructure and education will not only drive economic opportunities but will also provide North Carolinians with the skills to meaningfully utilize new technologies and compete in the AI workforce.
- **Broadband permitting.** Getting the necessary permits to build broadband infrastructure should not significantly burden the process of connecting North Carolinians. Investments in permitting workforce and tools will give BEAD participating providers the consistency and predictability necessary to confidently bring broadband to the hardest-to-reach communities of the State.
- **Workforce training.** To greatly expand communications infrastructure across this state as quickly as possible, a workforce of skilled technicians will be critical.
- **Eliminating household barriers to connectivity.** Increasing the number of individuals, households, and businesses that are meaningfully using the internet for workforce, education and healthcare to encourage investment and innovation in the state.

Taken together, these projects will secure and extend the broadband foundation laid by BEAD deployment projects—protecting infrastructure, expanding opportunity, and ensuring that federal investments yield lasting national benefits.

This Administration has the opportunity to not only oversee the most significant broadband deployment effort in generations—with the remaining BEAD funds, it can also facilitate state-led projects that will drive innovation and economic growth for years to come. North Carolina stands ready to act quickly and responsibly to utilize these funds and ensure their maximum impact.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Stein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Josh" and last name "Stein" clearly distinguishable.

Josh Stein
Governor