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VIA ECFS

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: *Rural Digital Opportunity Fund*, WC Docket No. 19-126

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On April 10, 2020, Frontier Communications Corporation (“Frontier”) submitted a list of 16,987 census blocks where it offers service at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or greater that nonetheless still appeared on the FCC’s preliminary list of eligible areas for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (“RDOF”) Phase I auction.¹ WISPA, NRECA, and NTCA have filed letters this week asking whether these census blocks reflect new builds since June 2019.² They do not. Frontier files this letter to confirm that the vast majority of these census blocks represent existing builds, including those undertaken as part of the Connect America Fund (“CAF”) Phase II program over the past five years. Frontier reported the vast majority of these census blocks as served at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or greater with its December 2019 Form 477 submission before the initial eligible census block list was released.³

In Frontier’s June 2019 Form 477 filing, the fastest available speed that Frontier reported over copper was 25/2 Mbps. Following its June 2019 Form 477 report, however, the Commission’s Industry Analysis Division reached out to inquire why Frontier was reporting broadband subscriptions at speeds of 25/3 Mbps and greater at the census tract level but not broadband availability at those speeds at the census block level. Frontier explained that due in part to previous vendor Form 477 reporting system limitations and in part to less widespread consumer uptake of these faster speeds, Frontier had reported a maximum speed of 25/2 Mbps even though speeds as fast as 115 Mbps were available to limited customer locations over

¹ See Letter from Diana Eisner, Frontier, to Marlene H. Dortch, FCC, WC Docket No. 19-126 (Apr. 10, 2020).

² See Letter from Louis Peraertz, WISPA, and Brian O’Hara, NRECA, to Marlene Dortch, FCC, WC Docket No.19-126 (Apr. 27, 2020); Letter from Mike Romano and Brian Ford, NTCA, to Marlene Dortch, FCC WC Docket No.19-126 (Apr. 29, 2020).

³ See *Wireline Competition Bureau Releases Comment Sought on Preliminary List of Eligible Areas for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I Auction*, Public Notice, DA 20-275 (Mar. 17, 2020).

copper depending on the distance from the digital subscriber line access multiplexer (“DSLAM”). Following this discussion with the Division, Frontier filed its updated speeds as part of its December 2019 Form 477 filing to fully reflect all speeds available over DSL, including speeds as fast as 115/7 Mbps. Frontier is in the process of refileing its June 2019 data to reflect these changes as well.

The Commission is still processing and has not yet posted December 2019 Form 477 data, but the 16,987 census blocks that were part of Frontier’s April 10 letter represent a fraction of the blocks Frontier serves at speeds of 45/3 Mbps and faster using DSL.⁴ Frontier’s December 2019 Form 477 includes over 130,000 census blocks nationwide that have access to speeds of at least 45/3 Mbps over DSL.⁵ This level of deployment at speeds of 25/3 Mbps and greater brings Frontier in line with peer DSL providers, including CenturyLink and Windstream, which report similar levels of availability over copper at speeds of 25/3 Mbps or greater.

A large number of the 16,987 census blocks that Frontier submitted with the April 10 letter are associated with Frontier’s deployments under the CAF Phase II program over the past five years. Under CAF Phase II, Frontier expanded broadband to over 600,000 homes and businesses at speeds of at least 10/1 Mbps. In many cases, as reflected in part with the April 10 letter, these homes and businesses have access to broadband at speeds as fast as 45/3 Mbps and up to 115/7 Mbps due to our extensive deployment and investment in these areas. To the extent commenters suggest Frontier is gaming the system, this is not the case. As others, including NTCA have noted, though these census blocks will not be eligible for RDOF Phase I, they remain high cost, and Frontier will not be eligible for ongoing high-cost support in these areas.⁶ To the extent individual homes in portions of some of these census blocks are unserved at speeds of 25/3 Mbps, Frontier—in addition to the members of NTCA, NRECA, and WISPA—will be able to bid on these areas when mapping is complete and RDOF Phase II is implemented.

Please contact the undersigned with any questions.

Sincerely,

/s/ AJ Burton

AJ Burton

cc: Alex Minard

⁴ Due to greater upload speed limitations, a download speed of 45 Mbps is possible over DSL when a corresponding upload speed of 3 Mbps is achievable.

⁵ Frontier’s filing includes over 118,000 census blocks with access to speeds of at least 25/2 Mbps over DSL, which did not meet the 3 Mbps upload speed threshold for an RDOF challenge.

⁶ See Comments of NTCA, WC Docket No. 19-126 at 35 (Sept. 20, 2019) (“[T]hose high-cost rural areas where the incumbent exceeded its buildout obligations under the prior regime and deployed something like a fiber-to-the-premise network should not be punished by the total loss of all support simply because higher-speed broadband is available there now.”).