



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

December 18, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President-Elect of the United States
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

Congratulations on your successful campaign for the presidency and ongoing effort to restore the soul of our nation. We welcome the opportunity to partner with you and Vice President-Elect Kamala D. Harris on the many challenges before us. As you are aware, our country is amid an unprecedented crisis and an unparalleled opportunity. The COVID-19 pandemic, rebuilding our economy, racial injustice, and climate change will all require attention and transformative action by the Biden Administration.

Universal access to affordable communications technology will be a core part of the solution for addressing these challenges, and the next Chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will play a mission-critical role in meeting Americans' connectivity needs. In the 86-year history of the FCC, there have only been two permanent Black Chairs. As Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), we recommend that the Biden Administration appoint Commissioner Geoffrey Starks Chairman of the FCC as he is uniquely situated to understand, identify with, and prioritize the needs of our most marginalized communities.

This moment requires us to address longstanding connectivity inequities that fall along racial, income, and geographic lines, which have for decades kept us from closing the digital divide. Commissioner Starks has advanced the work of the late Congressman John Lewis, who said: "Access to the internet...is the civil rights issue of the 21st century." We could not agree more. The Commissioner has called for a connectivity stimulus to expand the Lifeline program to provide meaningful access to our most low-income families; fund connections for our students; promote telemedicine; and encourage broadband service providers to grow their affordable offerings for struggling Americans. Commissioner Starks' leadership on these issues at the FCC demonstrates his unshakeable belief that it is imperative that we close the digital divide, and the time is now.

As the only Black FCC Commissioner, Starks has never faltered in centering communities of color in his policy proposals, convenings, and initiatives. He continues to call for the Commission to uphold its mandate to promote and advance ownership diversity in our media marketplace. By way

of brief example, as a result of his efforts the Commission will now consider a proposal championed by 21 civil rights organizations to allow the use of localized, geo-targeted content to improve service for FM radio audiences. This has great potential to increase revenue opportunities for small broadcast businesses and broadcasters of color, who face challenging economic circumstances, especially in the midst of the pandemic.

CBC Members have worked extensively with Commissioner Starks on numerous issues of deep importance to communities of color. For example, this spring, Commissioner Starks partnered with Caucus members to convene Presidents and leaders of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to highlight those critical institutions' unique connectivity challenges. We have also worked with him to address Black mental health, rural broadband, predatory use of cell phone location data, and algorithmic bias in artificial intelligence. The Caucus was particularly proud to see Commissioner Starks' groundbreaking leadership in the creation of the FCC Early Career Staff Diversity Initiative, which recruits talent from HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, with the goal of having the Commission's staff better represent the diversity of the country.

Commissioner Starks has also focused on protecting our country from all threats. He has been a leader on national security issues, working to eliminate untrustworthy equipment from America's communications networks. His *Find It, Fix It, Fund It* initiative has brought national attention to the urgent need to support small and rural companies as they work to make their networks more secure. Commissioner Starks also recognizes the potentially intrusive powers of advanced communications technologies and has advocated for robust enforcement against any misuses of consumer data that promote illegal discrimination or compromise personal privacy.

It should also be specifically noted that the Chair designation of a currently seated FCC Commissioner does not require a Senate confirmation. To that end, Commissioner Starks is singularly unique in that he can serve through 2024 as Chairman without a Senate confirmation battle.

The work of the next FCC Chair will have significant and long-lasting impacts on our nation, especially on communities of color, low-income communities, and rural communities. It is imperative that this seat be filled by an African American with extensive telecommunications policy expertise to address pressing issues of the digital divide, diversity, national security, and consumer protection. Therefore, we the undersigned, enthusiastically recommend Commissioner Geoffrey Starks to be named Chair of the Federal Communications Commission.

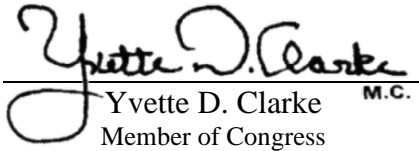
Sincerely,

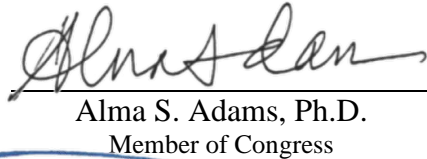


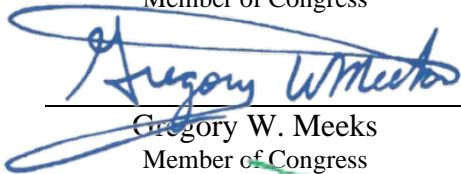
G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



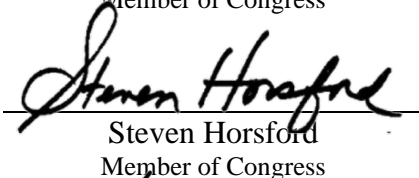
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

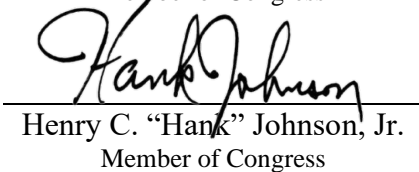

Yvette D. Clarke M.C.
Member of Congress

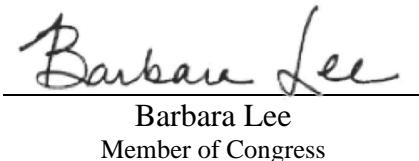

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

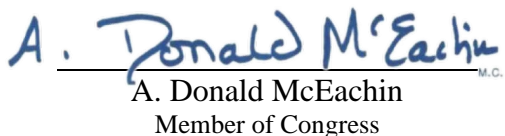

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

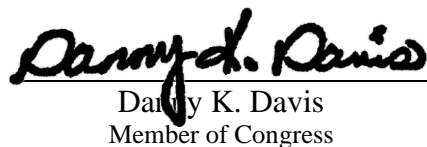

Al Green
Member of Congress

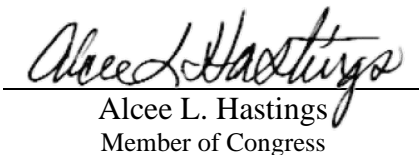

Steven Horsford
Member of Congress


Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

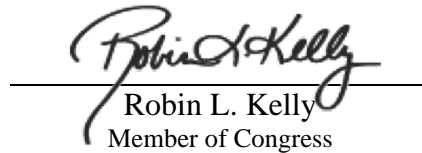

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

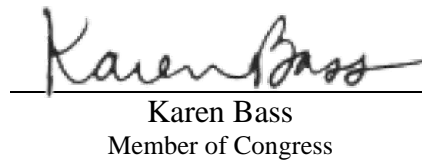

A. Donald McEachin M.C.
Member of Congress

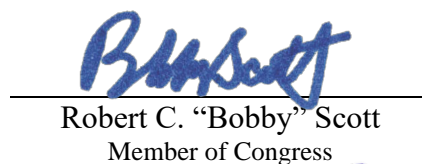

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

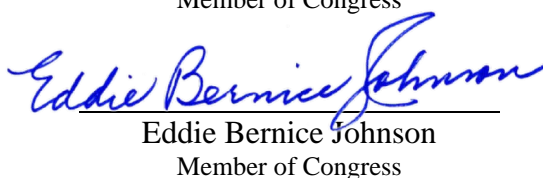

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

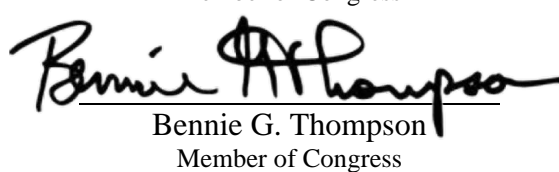

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress


Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

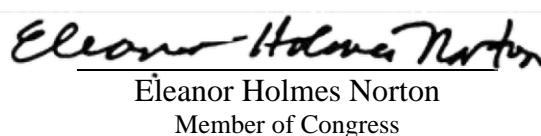

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

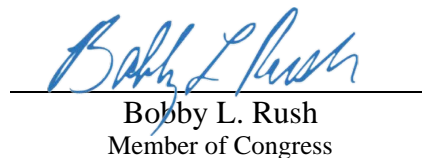

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress


Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress


Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress


Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

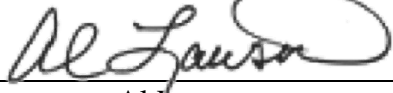

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress


Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

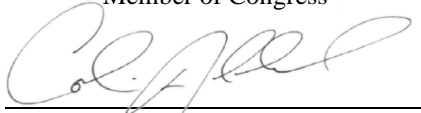

David Scott
Member of Congress



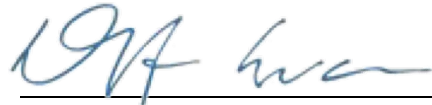
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



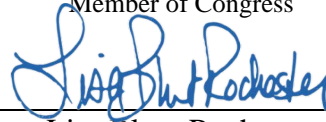
Al Lawson
Member of Congress



Colin Allred
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress