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December 3, 2015

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

On September 2, 2015, the Federal Communication Commission ("FCC") approved Frontier Communications' purchase of Verizon's wireline networks in California, Texas, and Florida, noting that certain state public utility commissions were also reviewing the proposed transfer. This transfer is especially significant as Frontier will become the second largest provider of voice and broadband services in California, serving millions of Californians, including my constituents in California's 36th Congressional District. This merger has the potential to significantly improve access to broadband services in my district, and I look forward to working with Frontier Communications to ensure they develop their infrastructure quickly and fairly.

Historically, broadband Internet services have not been deployed evenly throughout my district. Frontier's service area will include densely populated suburban communities such as Palm Desert, as well as rural areas including Coachella. Currently, there are troubling instances in which affluent communities enjoy good (though not universal) availability to broadband, while adjacent tribal and more rural or underserved areas have nothing but dial-up Internet access. There are also examples where deployment of broadband in urban low income and minority neighborhoods continues to lag behind.

If the transfer of Verizon's network is approved, I understand that Frontier will rely on Connect America Funds ("CAF"), administered by the FCC, as well as corresponding state funds such as the California Advanced Services Fund ("CASF") to expand and improve access to broadband Internet across these new service areas. Verizon has accepted approximately $192 million in CAF funds to be dispersed over the next six years on behalf of Frontier. Given Verizon's long-term commitment to provide CAF funding to Frontier, I trust the FCC will also continue to ensure that Frontier operates in the public's interest.

I have invited the CEO of Frontier, Melinda White, to tour my Congressional district and see firsthand the disparities that exist among communities just ten minutes away from each other. I look forward to working with the company to establish a robust, verifiable action plan to address the needs of the racially and economically diverse population of California. This plan must

include concrete steps to ensure diversity in their hiring practices, utilize contractors that reflect the diversity of their new service area, and include Latino-owned media outlets in their content delivery. Frontier's progress on this plan must be accountable through periodic progress reports and benchmark goals, and I urge the FCC to consider these points in its oversight role.

The FCC can—and should—require Frontier to address such public needs; it would be an impressive demonstration that Frontier understands the new market it seeks to serve, and it is committed to serving that market well, if Frontier voluntarily committed to take concrete steps to close the Digital Divide among underserved communities. I will support their efforts to accomplish this fundamental goals and I hope we can continue to work together cooperatively to serve the people of California's 36th Congressional District.

Sincerely,

Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress (CA-36)