To establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 25, 2019

Mr. TONKO (for himself and Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Advancing Critical Connectivity Expands Service, Small Business Resources, Opportunities, Access, and Data Based on Assessed Need and Demand Act” or the “ACCESS BROADBAND Act”.

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OFFICE OF INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND GROWTH.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary shall establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

SEC. 3. DUTIES.

(a) OUTREACH.—The Office shall—

(1) connect with communities that need access to high-speed internet and improved digital inclusion efforts through various forms of outreach and communication techniques;

(2) hold regional workshops across the country to share best practices and effective strategies for promoting broadband access and adoption;

(3) develop targeted broadband training and presentations for various demographic communities through various media; and

(4) develop and distribute publications (including toolkits, primers, manuals, and white papers) providing guidance, strategies, and insights to communities as the communities develop strategies to expand broadband access and adoption.

(b) TRACKING OF FEDERAL DOLLARS.—
(1) BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE.—The Office shall track the construction and use of and access to any broadband infrastructure built using any Federal support in a central database.

(2) ACCOUNTING MECHANISM.—The Office shall develop a streamlined accounting mechanism by which any agency offering a Federal broadband support program and the Commission through the Universal Service Fund shall provide the information described in paragraph (1) in a standardized and efficient fashion.

(3) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every year thereafter, the Office shall make public on the website of the Office and submit to the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report on the following:

(A) A description of the work of the Office for the previous year and the number of residents of the United States that received broadband as result of Federal broadband support programs and the Universal Service Fund program.
(B) A description of how many residents of the United States were provided broadband by which universal service mechanism or which Federal broadband support program.

(C) An estimate of the economic impact of such broadband deployment efforts on the local economy, including any effect on small businesses or jobs.

SEC. 4. STREAMLINED APPLICATIONS FOR SUPPORT.

(a) AGENCY CONSULTATION.—The Office shall consult with any agency offering a Federal broadband support program to streamline and standardize the applications process for financial assistance or grants for such program.

(b) AGENCY STREAMLINING.—Any agency offering a Federal broadband support program shall amend their applications for broadband support, to the extent practicable and as necessary, to streamline and standardize applications for Federal broadband support programs across the Government.

(c) SINGLE APPLICATION.—To the greatest extent practicable, the Office shall seek to create one application that may be submitted to apply for all, or substantially all, Federal broadband support programs.
(d) Website Required.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Office shall create a central website through which potential applicants can learn about and apply for support through any Federal broadband support program.

SEC. 5. COORDINATION OF SUPPORT.

The Office, any agency that offers a Federal broadband support program, and the Commission through the Universal Service Fund shall coordinate with the Office to ensure that support is being distributed in an efficient, technology-neutral, and financially sustainable manner, with the goal of serving the largest number of persons in the United States while avoiding overbuilding and promoting the most job and economic growth for all residents of the United States.

SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) Agency.—The term “agency” has the meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) Assistant Secretary.—The term “Assistant Secretary” means the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

(3) Commission.—The term “Commission” means the Federal Communications Commission.
(4) **Federal broadband support program.**—The term “Federal broadband support program” does not include any Universal Service Fund program and means any of the following programs (or any other similar Federal program) to the extent the program offers broadband internet service or programs for promoting broadband access and adoption for various demographic communities through various media for residential, commercial, community providers, or academic establishments:

(A) The Telecommunications and Technology Program of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

(B) The Telecommunications Infrastructure Loans and Loan Guarantees, the Rural Broadband Access Loans and Loan Guarantees, the Substantially Underserved Trust Areas Provisions, the Community Connect Grant Program, and the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program of the Rural Utilities Service of the Department of Agriculture.

(C) The Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs and the Planning and Local Technical Assistance Programs
of the Economic Development Administration of
the Department of Commerce.

(D) The Community Development Block
Grants and Section 108 Loan Guarantees, the
Funds for Public Housing Authorities: Capital
Fund and Operating Fund, the Multifamily
Housing, the Indian Community Development
Block Grant Program, the Indian Housing
Block Grant Program, the Title VI Loan Guar-
antee Program, Choice Neighborhoods, the
HOME Investment Partnerships Program, the
Housing Trust Fund, and the Housing Oppor-
tunities for Persons with AIDS of the Depart-
ment of Housing and Urban Development.

(E) The American Job Centers of the Em-
ployment and Training Administration of the
Department of Labor.

(F) The Library Services and Technology
Grant Programs of the Institute of Museum
and Library Services.

(5) Office.—The term “Office” means the Of-
ifice of Internet Connectivity and Growth established
pursuant to section 2.

(6) Universal Service Fund Program.—The
term “Universal Service Fund program” means any
program authorized under section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254) to help deploy broadband.

(7) Universal service mechanism.—The term “universal service mechanism” means any funding stream provided by a Universal Service Fund program to support broadband access.

SEC. 7. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act is intended to alter or amend any provision of section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254).