

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2023

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report uncovered that “federal broadband efforts are fragmented and overlapping, with more than 100 programs administered by 15 agencies.”¹ We appreciate GAO for its thoroughness and for the recommendations provided in this report, and we request that GAO build upon this work and conduct an additional review of federal, state, and local broadband efforts to determine the effectiveness of each program.

Specifically, we request that GAO examine the following issues and questions and provide recommendations on any actions Congress and the relevant agencies should take to improve the broadband regulatory structure:

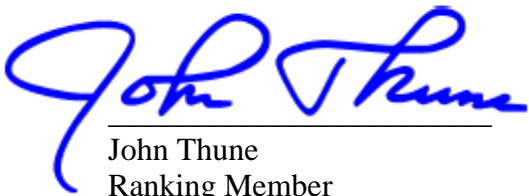
1. Of the 133 broadband funding programs GAO identified, and any new programs that have been created since, were the programs established in line with Congress’ directive on the funding’s intended purpose? What was the statutory basis for the establishment of each program?
 - a. Did each agency charged with establishing its broadband funding program follow Congress’ directive on the funding’s intended purpose?
2. Of the 133 broadband funding programs previously identified by GAO, and any new programs identified, what were the specific policy goals for each program and to what extent did each program meet these goals?
3. How often have federal programs’ funding overlapped other federal programs and on what basis did they do so?
4. How has the fragmented and overlapping approach the federal government taken with respect to broadband deployment affected the success of each program?

¹ Government Accountability Office, *National Strategy Needed to Guide Federal Efforts to Reduce Digital Divide*, May 2022. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104611.pdf>

5. Did the Federal Communications Commission, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, and U.S. Department of the Treasury fulfill the agreements set forth in the May 9, 2022, Memorandum of Understanding?
6. How have federal agencies coordinated their broadband programs with state and local broadband funding programs?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. GAO is an ally in Congress' work to ensure federal programs work as intended. Addressing weaknesses in each of these broadband programs will help ensure more Americans are connected to reliable broadband services.

Sincerely,



John Thune
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Communications, Media,
and Broadband
U.S. Senate



Ben Ray Luján
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Communications, Media,
and Broadband
U.S. Senate