

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 18, 2019

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley,

As you work to develop the Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we write to express our strong support for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grant program.

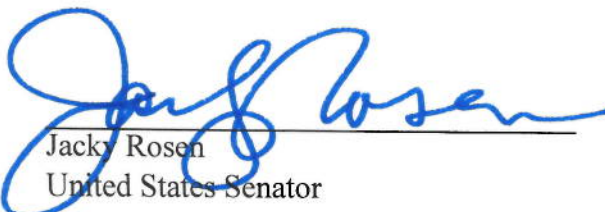
The DLT grant program assists rural and tribal communities in acquiring distance learning and telemedical technologies so that local teachers and medical service providers can connect to educators and medical professionals in other parts of the country. Since 1994, the DLT grant program has helped to establish hundreds of distance learning and telemedicine systems, improving the quality of life for thousands of residents in rural communities all across the United States.

DLT specifically helps rural communities invest in telecommunications-enabled information, audio and visual equipment, and advanced technologies to assist its residents in accessing educational and health care services. Recipients have used the program to provide distance learning paramedic courses to first responders, improve access to specialty health education, and establish partnerships between rural high schools and community colleges. Recent DLT recipients have used the grants to help address opioid abuse treatment and mental health counseling in rural America.

These educational and health services are vital. DLT grants enable rural communities to overcome any barriers they face in accessing healthcare or education, including long travel distances or a shortage of providers. Given the critical importance of these programs, we urge you to fund the USDA's Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant program at or above the President's request for FY20.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



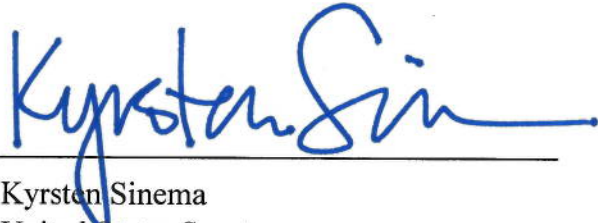
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



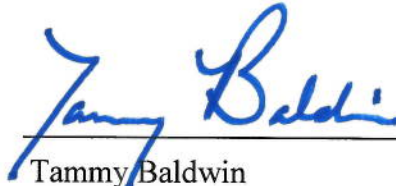
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



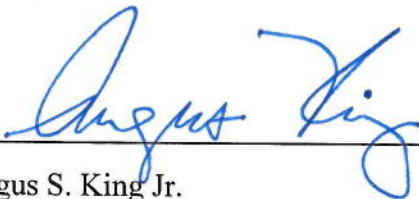
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



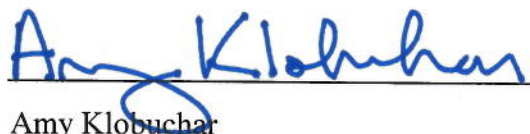
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



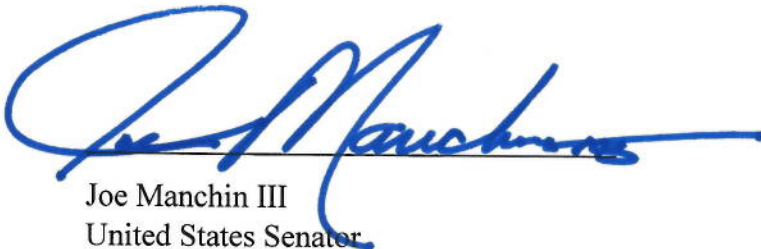
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator