

June 2, 2015

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Thune and Nelson,

Technologies that rely on unlicensed spectrum are integral to our economy, contributing billions of dollars to our GDP and generating even more in economic value.¹ More unlicensed spectrum is critical for economic growth and innovation. Consumers and businesses need access to more unlicensed spectrum to meet the demand for critically important uses like Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, and to enable new markets and technologies. There has been strong support for more unlicensed spectrum from the White House, members of Congress from both sides of the aisle, and from every member of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The 5 GHz frequency band is well-positioned to connect our devices in densely populated, potentially congested urban areas and in stadiums, workplaces, campuses, and other places with high wireless traffic today. As the FCC and Congress have recognized, the next step is for the FCC to open the 5.9 GHz portion of the band – so that consumers, businesses, libraries and schools will realize the full potential of “Gigabit Wi-Fi”.

That is why we write to express our support for the Wi-Fi Innovation Act of 2015, S. 424. This legislation directs the FCC to explore making the upper part of the 5 GHz frequency band available for unlicensed use, paving the way for Wi-Fi at gigabit speeds using the latest Wi-Fi standard, 802.11ac. Making this spectrum available for use by Wi-Fi and other unlicensed technologies would spur innovation, add value to the U.S. economy and help fulfill our nation’s goals of ubiquitous, affordable broadband access.

It also would add robustness to the Wi-Fi connections already in use today by consumers who are placing life-saving Wi-Fi calls from their homes to 911 and using video

¹ A February 2014 study by Telecom Advisory Services, LLC for WifiForward found unlicensed spectrum generated \$222 billion in value to the U.S. economy in 2013 and contributed \$6.7 billion to U.S. GDP. Further study in August 2014 estimated that by 2017, unlicensed spectrum will add over \$49 billion to U.S. GDP and generate over 547 billion in value to the U.S. economy.

telemedicine services with their doctors for diagnosing, treating, and monitoring illnesses remotely.

The legislation is carefully crafted to promote solutions that will not result in harmful interference to incumbent users. It directs the FCC to work with all stakeholders to develop a plan to test spectrum sharing approaches. The Act also directs the FCC to conduct testing in an open, transparent way that accurately reflects real-world operating parameters. This testing would determine whether potential interference issues exist between Wi-Fi and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) deployments. If the FCC determines that harmful interference is not an issue, then it should proceed to promote spectrum sharing in this band.

The Wi-Fi community has long worked to identify a sharing mechanism that will allow both future ITS deployments and next-generation unlicensed devices to responsibly share available frequencies, finally putting this critical band of spectrum to the most productive use. Action contemplated by the proposed legislation will help us break the logjam. As Commissioners Rosenworcel and O’Rielly wrote in February “...there are possibilities for greater unlicensed use in the U-NII-4 band while still permitting and protecting [incumbents], and the time to make that happen is now. By doing so, we can support automobile safety, expand the spectrum used for Wi-Fi and grow our wireless economy. That strikes both of us as goals worth pursuing.”

We urge the Committee to move quickly to bring it this bipartisan bill with widespread support to the floor, and urge Congress to pass it.

Respectfully,

