



Laphonza Butler
North American Policy Director

Airbnb
888 Brannan Street
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June 8, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy:

Airbnb writes to express our strong support for the necessary federal funding to implement sustainable, long-term policy solutions for broadband deployment throughout our country in order to provide more opportunity in every city, state and territory of the United States.

Broadband accessibility is an issue of both deployment and affordability, both of which need to be addressed in any congressional infrastructure package. We applaud the proposal set forward by President Biden in the American Jobs Plan and urge leaders of both parties in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate to enact the most robust broadband package possible. We support national broadband policy solutions and corresponding funding to promote economic growth and new opportunities for America's rural residents.

Rural Communities & Broadband Access

As you know, the Census Bureau reports a wide gap in the estimates of Americans without internet access, creating the two-part policy goal of deployment and affordability. As you consider the various challenges across national broadband internet deployment, wholly addressing the accessibility gap in rural areas can contribute a foundation for solutions to address the adoption gap more prevalent in urban areas.

Rural America needs a secure onramp to their technological future. Remoteness makes routine economic interactions more difficult and costly. Rural economies are more likely than urban ones to heavily rely on a single industry or employer. Insufficient rural infrastructure—roads, energy and water systems, and of course access to broadband internet—limits growth in countless ways.

Airbnb in Rural Communities

Rural Hosts make up a quarter of Airbnb Hosts in the U.S., and on average the typical rural Host has earned a total of \$8,448 total since the start of the pandemic, over \$2,000 more than the average from 2019. In April, Airbnb released [new data](#) showing that U.S. travelers are increasingly planning new travel, opting for off-the-beaten path locations. While nearly [one in five](#)—18.4 percent—of active



Airbnb listings nationally are located in rural areas, just 12.5 percent of hotel rooms are. In 43 states, Airbnb's share of supply (active listings) is greater than hotels' share of supply (rooms).

Hosts on Airbnb keep up to 97 percent of the price they choose to charge for their listing, and our data shows that in 2019, up to 50 percent of U.S. guest spending occurred in the neighborhoods where they stay. As the world opens back up post-pandemic, travel is rebounding and home sharing can help rural communities benefit directly from the tourism economy, which measures over 10 percent of U.S. gross domestic products.

Airbnb's Rural Investments

As travel rebounds, we want to continue to be a tool for economic empowerment for everyday people, including communities that have not traditionally benefited from tourism. With travel to large urban centers and popular tourist destinations disrupted in the past year, more people are discovering (or rediscovering) the beauty of The Great Outdoors, and choosing getaways to more secluded destinations.

Our support for rural broadband builds on existing efforts to encourage healthy tourism and entrepreneurship in rural and under-resourced communities. This week, we announced the launch of our Entrepreneurship Academy in the US, a training program to make it easier for rural communities to host and benefit from the tourism economy. In our 2017 and 2020 partnerships with the National Park Foundation, the nonprofit partner to the US National Park Service, Airbnb worked with the Foundation to make it easier for guests to find places to stay around ten National Parks across the United States.

Building Rural Solutions Together

Addressing the challenges facing rural communities requires a comprehensive strategy that takes stock of the existing assets and needs in rural America. We support Congress expanding broadband deployment, including tailored approaches to meet the unique challenges facing rural communities. We remain committed to being an accessible and impactful partner to you in this work and look forward to the development of internet infrastructure solutions that meet the location and needs of every American.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laphonza Butler'.

Laphonza Butler
North American Policy Director
Airbnb

CC: The Honorable Kamala Harris, Vice President of the United States, The White House
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair, U.S. Senate Commerce Committee
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Commerce Committee
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chair, U.S. House Energy & Commerce Committee
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member, U.S. House Energy & Commerce Committee