

LGBT Technology Partnership

November 16, 2018

Committee on Transportation and the Environment
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 108, Washington, D.C. 20004

VIA abenjamin@dccouncil.us

Attn: Ms. Aukima Benjamin, Staff Assistant to the Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Re: 5G Public Roundtable

Dear Ms. Benjamin,

The LGBT Technology Partnership (“LGBT Tech”) brings together cutting edge tech companies, nonprofit organizations, policy makers, scholars and innovators to improve access, increase inclusion, ensure safety and empower entrepreneurship for LGBT communities around technology. LGBT Tech encourages the continued early adoption and use of cutting-edge, new and emerging technologies by providing information, education and strategic outreach for LGBT communities. We are a national, nonpartisan group of LGBT organizations, academics and high technology companies whose mission is to engage with critical technology and public policy leaders for strategic discussions at all levels. LGBT Tech empowers LGBT communities and individuals, and ensures that media, telecommunications and high technology issues of specific concern to LGBT communities are addressed in public policy conversations.

LGBT Tech welcomes the opportunity to submit testimony in the above-referenced public roundtable. Technology, through smart phones, high-speed networks and other current and emerging technologies allow LGBT people to come together, to meet and to empower each other, regardless of geographic distance. No longer does an LGBT individual, regardless of culture or background, need to grow up in a world where they feel alone. We must continue this advocacy, especially as it relates to closing the digital divide and making technology more accessible for all. This is where the development and deployment of 5G wireless networks plays a pivotal role.

LGBT Tech has spoken about the importance of launching newer technologies to close the digital divide and specifically how 5G has the potential to transform technological access to unserved and underserved communities such as the LGBTQ

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community by helping to close the digital divide and allow individuals to access basic yet essential services that can make a tremendous impact. That is significant since minority communities like the LGBTQ community cannot afford to fall behind in the technology race when adequate access to reliable fast technology can impact everything from healthcare, education, economic opportunities or finding a safe community online and could make a huge difference between success and failure in everyday life. Technology, through smartphones and wireless broadband networks, connects and empowers the LGBTQ community regardless of their geographic location. For these reasons, LGBT Tech has consistently supported efforts to bring 5G technology to the masses as quickly as possible.

While the tech community is buzzing with the potential new platforms, intersections, and ventures that 5G could bring, it is important we not lose sight of the simple, yet life-changing, impact it could have. Something as simple as easing the burden of a doctor's visit, for example. As a minority group, the LGBTQ community can face uphill battles when looking for a doctor—18 percent of LGBTQ Americans avoid going to the doctor because they fear discrimination. Naturally, many turn to their phones for the answer, with 81 percent of LGBTQ youth searching for medical related information online compared to only 46 percent of non-LGBTQ youth. Imagine the life-changing benefits that could be experienced if those in need could connect with a medical professional through their phone. 5G presents a stronger, more reliable network that will give more Americans access to telehealth services. This means more choice in who to see for treatment, access to a wider variety of specialists, and a greater market for care.

Bridging the digital divide requires a multi-pronged approach and LGBT Tech urges the District to continue its work removing barriers to deployment that will ensure that these much needed new technologies reach those that need it the most as quickly as possible. 5G has enormous potential to be a powerful tool to eradicate the digital divide as it has the potential to provide faster communications and increase response times for underserved and unserved communities. For these reasons, LGBT Tech urges policymakers to prioritize the development of 5G.