

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

November 16, 2012

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

1404

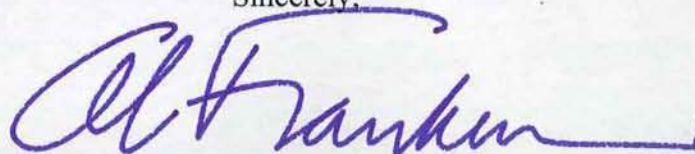
Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to ask that you finalize reforms to the Universal Service Rural Health Care Fund proposed on July 15, 2010 that would make skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) eligible for rural health care support. As the nation moves towards using health information technology to improve quality and lower costs, rural Americans must not get left behind.

Skilled nursing facilities are an especially important care provider in rural areas—nearly one-third of all skilled nursing facilities are located in rural areas. Your 2010 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking recognized that in rural areas, advances in telemedicine have empowered SNFs to treat patients quickly and at lower cost, because patients no longer have to be transferred to hospitals for treatment. For this reason, in 2010, you proposed that SNFs be eligible for rural health care support through the Universal Service Rural Health Care Fund.

However, more than two years later, this rule has yet to be finalized. Despite their potential to provide high-quality, low-cost care in rural areas, SNFs remain ineligible for help obtaining broadband connectivity. Your proposed rule could help rural health providers connect to the 21st century, and I respectfully ask that you finalize this rule as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration of this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Al Franken
United States Senator