February 5, 2021

The Honorable Curt Friesen
Chair, Transportation and Telecommunications Committee
Room #1110
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: Opposition to LB 498 – Broadband Mapping

Chairperson Friesen,

On behalf of CTIA, the trade association for the wireless communications industry, I write in opposition to LB 498 related to broadband mapping. While we agree that accurate broadband mapping is essential to addressing issues of digital equity, we believe the legislation is unnecessary given existing federal efforts and also raises significant security concerns.

CTIA shares LB 498’s goal of advancing broadband deployment and adoption across the state, and wireless carriers have been on the forefront of efforts to meet those goals. In fact, the need for connectivity has clearly been thrust into the spotlight over the past year due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis that has impacted us all. Strong wireless networks enable distance learning for students separated from teachers; telehealth for patients and doctors; employees to work from home; small businesses to shift online; older adults to stay in touch with family and combat social isolation; public safety personnel to utilize the best resources for their, and our safety; and so much more.

CTIA strongly supports ubiquitous mobile broadband coverage and the wireless industry has been on the cutting-edge of promoting broadband deployment to meet ever-growing consumer demand. In 2019, the wireless industry built more than 46,000 new cell sites across the U.S.—more than in the preceding three years combined. Last year’s wireless industry investment, totaling $29.1 billion, marked a four-year high.1 Nearly 10 percent of the GDP increase of the entire U.S. economy from 2011–19 was due to the growth of the U.S. wireless industry. U.S. 4G networks support 20 million jobs, drove nearly $700 billion in economic contribution last year alone, and have saved consumers $130 billion annually over an extended period of time.2

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In terms of providing broadband coverage where needed, both Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) are taking steps to improve the collection and dissemination of data on broadband availability. In March of 2020, with strong bipartisan support, Congress passed the Broadband DATA Act, which built on prior steps to improve data collection and mapping at the FCC.\textsuperscript{3}

Among other things, it:

- Set strong parameters for service availability data collected from mobile broadband providers to ensure accuracy;
- Strengthened enforcement against providers that submit inaccurate broadband data;
- Required the FCC to collect granular service availability data from wired, fixed wireless, and satellite broadband providers, and allowed the FCC to consider whether to collect verified coverage data from state, local, and tribal governments, as well as from other entities;
- Created a process for state, local, and tribal governments, consumers, and other groups to challenge FCC maps with their own data; and
- Established a crowdsourcing process that will allow the public to participate in data collection.

In addition to LB 498 being unnecessary and duplicative of federal efforts, we have concerns regarding the data collection process and the public sharing of broadband data. CTIA members would have no insight into the third party contractors’ data collection practices and the accuracy of their instruments. Furthermore, making the broadband maps, then, publicly available provides a direct road map for potential bad actors to vandalize and harm wireless networks.

For all the reasons outlined herein, we respectfully request LB 498 not advance.

Sincerely,

Bethanne Cooley
Assistant Vice President
State Legislative Affairs

\textsuperscript{3} Codified at 47 U.S.C. §641 et seq.