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For Immediate Release

CHAIRMAN PAI ANNOUNCES PLAN FOR \$200 MILLION COVID-19 TELEHEALTH PROGRAM

New Program Would Provide Immediate Support to Health Care Facilities and Patients Across the Country; Separate Connected Care Pilot Program Would Study Long-Term Role of Telehealth

WASHINGTON, March 30, 2020—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai today announced his plan for a COVID-19 Telehealth Program to support health care providers responding to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. As part of the CARES Act, Congress appropriated \$200 million to the FCC to support health care providers' use of telehealth services in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. **If adopted by the Commission**, the Program would help eligible health care providers purchase telecommunications, broadband connectivity, and devices necessary for providing telehealth services. These services would directly help COVID-19 patients and provide care to patients with other conditions who might risk contracting the coronavirus when visiting a healthcare provider—while reducing practitioners' potential exposure to the virus.

The Chairman has also presented his colleagues with final rules to stand up a broader, longer-term **Connected Care Pilot Program**. It would study how connected care could be a permanent part of the Universal Service Fund by making available up to \$100 million of universal service support over three years to help defray eligible health care providers' costs of providing telehealth services to patients at their homes or mobile locations, with an emphasis on providing those services to low-income Americans and veterans.

“As we self-isolate and engage in social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, **telehealth will continue to become more and more important across the country**. Our nation’s health care providers are under incredible, and still increasing, strain as they fight the pandemic. My plan for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program is a critical tool to address this national emergency. I’m calling on my fellow Commissioners to vote promptly to adopt the draft order I circulated today, so that we can take immediate steps to provide support for telehealth services and devices to health care providers during this national crisis,” said Chairman Pai. “I’d like to thank Congress for acting with bipartisan decisiveness to allocate funding for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program and Commissioner Carr for his leadership on telehealth issues, including the Connected Care Pilot Program.”

“I am grateful to Chairman Pai for his leadership in accelerating this important initiative and for fast-tracking a COVID-19 Telehealth Program. This decision will further strengthen the nation’s response to the coronavirus pandemic and help Americans access high-quality healthcare without having to visit a hospital in person,” said Commissioner Carr.

About the COVID-19 Telehealth Program: This \$200 million Program would immediately support health care providers responding to the pandemic by providing eligible health care providers support to purchase telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to enable the provision of telehealth services during this emergency period. It would provide selected applicants with full funding for these eligible telehealth services and devices. In order to receive funding, eligible health care providers would submit a streamlined application to the Commission for this program, and the Commission would award funds to selected applicants on a rolling basis until the funds are exhausted or until the current pandemic has ended.

About the Connected Care Pilot Program: This three-year Pilot Program would provide universal service support to help defray health care providers' qualifying costs of providing connected care services. It would target funding to eligible health care providers, with a primary focus on pilot projects that would primarily benefit low-income or veteran patients. The Pilot Program would make available up to \$100 million, which would be separate from the budgets of the existing Universal Service Fund programs and the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. The Pilot Program would provide funding for selected pilot projects to cover 85% of the eligible costs of broadband connectivity, network equipment, and information services necessary to provide connected care services to the intended patient population. In order to participate, eligible health care providers would submit an application to the Commission for the Pilot Program, and the Commission would announce the selected pilot projects.

For updates on the FCC's wide array of actions during the coronavirus pandemic, visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/coronavirus>. For more information on the FCC's Keep Americans Connected Pledge, visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected>.

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