

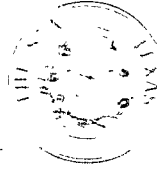


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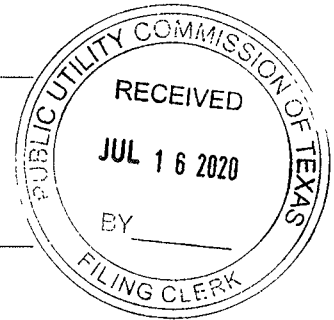
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TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**EDDIE LUCIO III**

DISTRICT 38  
CAMERON COUNTY



July 10, 2020

Commissioners  
Public Utility Commission of Texas  
1701 N. Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Walker, Commissioner D'Andrea, and Commissioner Botkin,

I appreciate your continued leadership during this unprecedented time for Texas and our nation.

During the ongoing public health and economic crises, connectivity is especially important to enable Texans to have reliable, affordable access to telemedicine, remote work, distance learning, e-commerce, and connections with friends and family. Connectivity is important across the entire state, but most critically to Texans in rural areas. The Universal Service Fund is a very important part of sustaining and growing that connectivity in rural Texas.

I understand this Commission recently had the opportunity to keep the fund solvent but chose not to do so. This decision could have long lasting and perhaps devastating ramifications to more than half our state. If the fund were to be bankrupt, I am concerned several of our small local phone companies, many of whom are phone cooperatives originally created because their service areas were underserved or had no service at all, will simply close their doors.

The commission has several options at its disposal to keep the fund viable: Increasing the assessment (which the commission has done several times previously), changing the applicability of the assessments to include VOIP or other internet based calls, or shifting from a revenue based assessment to a per connection based assessment. All of these can be accomplished by rule and will not require legislative action.

Several statutes and many prior PUC precedents require the Commission to fund universal service, I would ask that you follow the law and do so.

If further legislative action is required, I am prepared to stand with rural Texans in providing solutions for their connectivity needs. Unfortunately, if the funding issue is not addressed in the short term a legislative solution will be too late.



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Again, I appreciate the Commission's leadership during this time, and I trust you will make appropriate choices to ensure the law is followed and that all of Texas keeps the connectivity that is so desperately needed.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to call if you have any questions. I look forward to your action on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eddie Lucio III".

Eddie Lucio, III