

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

January 11, 2021

Thomas M. Rutledge
Chairman and CEO
Charter Communications, Inc.
400 Atlantic Street
Stamford, CT 06901

Dear Mr. Rutledge:

As our nation continues to confront both a public health and economic crisis, it is critical that Americans have access to reliable and affordable internet service. Over the last ten months, internet service became even more essential as many Americans were forced to transition for the immediate future to remote work and online school. Broadband networks seem to have largely withstood these massive shifts in usage. Unfortunately, what cannot be overlooked or underestimated is the extent to which families without home internet service—particularly those with school-aged children at home—have been left out and left behind.

In March, members of the Committee on Energy and Commerce wrote to you to inquire about the steps your company was taking to ensure that everyone would be able to get and stay connected during the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.¹ Across the industry, many companies announced plans to introduce or expand affordable service offerings, free months of service, opening of Wi-Fi hotspots, and the waiver of data caps.² The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) also announced a voluntary pledge, for which over 800 companies promised not to disconnect customers who fell behind on payments.³ These

¹ Letter from Rep. Jerry McNerney et al., to Cox Communications et al. (Mar. 12, 2020) (The inquiry was sent to the chief executives of Cox Communications, Altice USA, Frontier Communications, T-Mobile US, Charter Communications, AT&T, CenturyLink, Verizon Communications, and Comcast Cable Communications).

² Federal Communications Commission, *Keep Americans Connected* (www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected) (accessed Dec. 16, 2020).

³ *Internet and wireless providers will waive late fees and keep Americans connected*, CNET (Mar. 16, 2020) (www.cnet.com/news/internet-and-wireless-providers-will-waive-late-fees-and-

commitments were critical to helping struggling families stay connected during this severe economic downturn when millions of Americans have either lost their jobs or are working fewer hours.

With the expiration of the FCC's pledge, and the passage of time, some companies have already started to abandon the policies they adopted in the early days of the pandemic even though COVID-19 continues to surge throughout the nation and millions of Americans remain unemployed or under-employed. One major internet service provider is raising prices on its internet plans and re-imposing—and expanding the reach of—data caps on home internet plans.⁴ This is an egregious action at a time when households and small businesses across the country need high-speed, reliable broadband more than ever but are struggling to make ends meet.

To assist the Committee's ongoing efforts to ensure that Americans can stay connected during this ongoing national crisis, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. Did your company participate in the FCC's "Keep Americans Connected" pledge?
2. Have you increased prices for fixed or mobile consumer internet service since the start of the pandemic, or do you plan to raise prices on such plans within the next six months? If so, please provide detailed information about the types of plans and how much more your subscribers will pay for each plan.
3. Have you increased prices for fixed or mobile consumer phone service since the start of the pandemic, or do you plan to raise prices on such plans within the next six months? If so, please provide detailed information about the types of plans and the how much more your subscribers will pay for each plan.
4. Prior to March 2020, did any of your service plans impose a maximum data consumption threshold on your subscribers?
5. Since March 2020, has your company modified or imposed any new maximum data consumption thresholds on service plans, or do you plan to do so within the next six months? If so, please provide detailed information about the nature of new or modified charges levied on subscribers based on data usage.
6. Did your company stop disconnecting customers' internet service due to their inability to pay during the pandemic? If so, did your company resume disconnecting such customers

keep-americans-connected). *See also*, Federal Communications Commission, *Keep Americans Connected* (accessed Dec. 16, 2020) (www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected).

⁴ *Comcast to impose home internet data cap of 1.2TB in more than a dozen US states next year*, The Verge (Nov. 23, 2020). *See also*, Rob Pegoraro, *As Comcast enforces data caps nationwide, will AT&T, Verizon, Charter and other internet providers follow?*, USA Today (Nov. 26, 2020).

and when did you resume those disconnections? How many accounts have you disconnected since March 2020 due to customers' inability to pay?

7. Did your company stop disconnecting customers' telephone service due to their inability to pay during the pandemic? If so, did your company resume disconnecting such customers and when did you resume those disconnections? How many subscriptions or accounts have you disconnected since March 2020 due to customers' inability to pay?
8. Do you offer a plan designed for low-income households, or a plan established in March or later to help students and families with connectivity during the pandemic? Please provide details of the plans, including any upgrades or enhancements that were made for families during the pandemic, and if such upgrades or enhancements are still in effect. Since March, or later if the program was established after March 2020, how many customers have signed up for these program(s)?
9. Beyond service offerings for low-income customers, what steps are you currently taking to assist individuals and families facing financial hardship due to circumstances related to COVID-19? Is your company, for example, taking steps to extend bill due dates, waive fees, or provide service at no cost?

We appreciate your assistance in this important matter. We request that you provide your responses to the Committee by no later than January 25, 2021. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Jennifer Epperson with the Majority Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman



Mike Doyle
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications
and Technology



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress