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Congresswoman Matsui Stresses that Broadband Affordability Must be Addressed in Reform of Universal Service Fund

WASHINGTON, DC– Today, Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-05) participated in the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet hearing on H.R. 5828, the Universal Service Reform Act. One year ago today, Congresswoman Matsui introduced H.R. 3646, the Broadband Affordability Act, which would expand the Universal Service Fund’s Lifeline Assistance program for universal broadband adoption.

Rep. Matsui’s opening statement, as prepared for delivery at today’s hearing, is below:

“Unfortunately, millions of Americans, particularly in these tough economic times, simply can’t afford the cost associated with in-home broadband service. As a result, they are at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to employment, education, and other opportunities. So we are seeing more and more disabled Americans, seniors, and teenagers traveling several miles to their nearest community center or library, just to get online.

“We know that broadband adoption rates are largely associated with income levels, and the cost of broadband services continues to be a barrier for hard-working families. According to the FCC, 28 million Americans do not subscribe purely because of affordability barriers.

“That’s why, just about one year ago today, I introduced H.R. 3646, the Broadband Affordability Act, which would expand the Universal Service Fund ‘Lifeline Assistance’ Program for universal broadband adoption. This proposal will ensure that all Americans living in urban and rural areas have access to affordable broadband services.

“We never know where the next great idea or invention will come from, so we must continue to eliminate barriers to accessing broadband services for our constituents. And I strongly believe that any reform to the Universal Service Fund needs to address broadband affordability barriers.

“I look forward to continue working with Chairmen Boucher, Waxman, and my colleagues on moving forward and reforming the Universal Service Fund.”

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