

AUGUST 06, 2012

FCC SEEKS ADDITIONAL COMMENT ON RURAL HEALTH CARE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

In a recent **Public Notice** the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") seeks to develop a more robust record in the pending Rural Health Care reform rulemaking, particularly with regard to the proposed Broadband Service Program ("BSP"). Through the FCC's Universal Service Fund Program ("USFP"), the FCC has funded (on an eighty-five percent (85%) basis) infrastructure projects that enable health care providers in rural areas to tap into medical and technical expertise of the health care providers on their networks using telemedicine and other telehealth applications to improve the quality and lower the cost of health care for their participants.

In recent months the Commission staff has attempted to build a more robust record to inform its rulemaking through outreach calls and meetings with current program participants, as well as other entities knowledgeable about rural health care, telemedicine, and health IT. Specifically, the FCC is looking to develop a better record of (1) how health care providers utilize consortiums/alliances to acquire health IT networks and technology that provides broad benefits to the health care community; (2) whether urban health care providers should be included in infrastructure projects for rural health care providers; (3) what services and technology should be included within the scope of the USFP; (4) use of the competitive bidding process and multi-year contracts; and (5) broadband needs of rural health care providers.

The deadline for submitting a comment is August 23, 2012, and the deadline for submitting a reply comment is September 7, 2012. If you would like to submit a comment on any of these matters, or if you would like a summary of other issues on which the FCC is seeking comment, please contact Hall Render.

Should you have any questions, please contact William Dummett at 317.977.1427 or wdummett@hallrender.com.