

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 20th, 2022

Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel

We write to you to highlight the importance of the Federal Communications Commission's (Commission) consideration of a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking entitled *Improving Public Reporting on Wireless Emergency Alert Reliability*¹. If adopted, the Commission will take a necessary step toward ensuring wireless emergency alerts (WEAs) are promptly delivered to cellular devices during emergencies and natural disasters.

Authorized federal, state, and local governments and emergency management agencies have the ability to send verified and geographically targeted alerts to WEA-capable mobile devices to warn of imminent emergencies, threats, or natural disasters such as wildfires. While over 1,600 entities nationwide are authorized to send WEAs, less than half have ever done so. According to reports², concerns about the geographic accuracy, delivery³, or reliability of WEAs have hampered confidence in the WEA system and impacted its adoption by emergency management authorities. Now more than ever, it is critical the Commission consider taking meaningful steps within its authorities to establish performance requirements⁴ and improve the reliability of WEA delivery. Americans must have confidence they'll receive timely, life-saving emergency alerts to protect themselves and their loved ones during times of crisis.

Early warnings to evacuate and seek shelter ahead of fast-spreading wildfires are necessary to save lives and property. During last December's Marshall Fire, more than 1,000 homes and businesses were destroyed. Coloradans are still removing debris, seeking to recoup lost property, and recovering from the disaster. The WEA system was not used during the Marshall Fire due to existing concerns about its reliability and delivery, and many Boulder residents did not receive any timely emergency alert to evacuate from the blaze through the private alerting system that was used instead by local authorities. We must ensure there is confidence in tools such as WEA to perform flawlessly and assist our first responders in carrying out their life-saving responsibilities. The Marshall Fire is the most destructive wildfire in Colorado's history and underscores the need for a whole-of-government effort to increase our resilience against natural disasters and improve our emergency response capabilities, including WEAs.

¹ Federal Communications Commission, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Wireless Emergency Alerts (PS Docket No. 15-91), Amendments to Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System (PS Docket No. 15-94), March 31, 2022

² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Emergency Alert and Warning Systems: Current Knowledge and Future Research Directions* at 50 (2018)

³ Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Report: August 11, 2021 Nationwide WEA Test, at 3 (2021), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-378907A1.pdf>

⁴ Government Accountability Office, *Emergency Alerting: Agencies Need to Address Pending Applications and Monitor Industry Progress on System Improvements* (2020), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-294.pdf>

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We thank you for your consideration of this matter and we look forward to supporting the Commission in its effort to improve the performance, reliability, and accuracy of wireless emergency alerts during times of crisis, consistent with all applicable rules and regulations.

Sincerely,



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator