

WINDSTREAM HOLDINGS, INC.

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*President and Chief Executive Officer*

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April 15, 2020

Representative Doug Collins  
1504 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
2407 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Austin Scott  
2417 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Collins, Bishop, and Scott:

Thank you for your letter of April 10. Windstream appreciates the opportunity to share how prior capital investments in our network have prepared it to function well in these unprecedented times.

I must begin by saying how proud I am of the way the 1,200 Windstream employees in Georgia have responded during this crisis. They have remained focused on serving our customers despite sharing the same concerns for their families and their personal health as all other Georgians. Our technicians have continued to install and upgrade service to ensure Georgia necessary access to the internet for customers working from home, who have children attending school at home, or who may be operating essential small businesses, while also maintaining the critical backbone of our network infrastructure. Our call center employees in Cornelia and Dalton quickly embraced the technical challenges of working from home and are responding diligently to customer inquiries. Our stores were closed to protect the safety of the public and our employees, but our retail staff continues to assist customers by phone and e-mail.

Significant capital investment in our entire network has resulted in strong network performance in the face of higher usage by our customers. We are seeing elongated peak usage, but the network is built to withstand this peak. Therefore, increased usage has not challenged the capacity of our network to provide a robust experience for customers.

In Georgia specifically, network upgrades have positioned us well to meet customer demands in recent weeks, as more Georgians stay home and increasingly rely on internet access for news, work, education and recreation.

Over the past few years, Windstream has invested over \$500 million directly in our Georgia network, increasing the availability of 25 Mbps or greater broadband service to nearly 66 percent of the households we pass. In 2013, 2,500 Georgia households had access to 25 Mbps. Today, 472,000 households have access to speeds of 25 Mbps or greater. In addition, 270,000 have access to 100 Mbps or greater speeds.

As you are aware, Windstream is a significant participant in the FCC's Connect America Fund Phase II ("CAF2") program. Under that program, Windstream is required to deploy 10/1 Mbps or better broadband to 64,721 households in Georgia, but we went farther and deployed CAF2 speeds to over 83,000 households—a nearly 30 percent increase above the FCC's requirement.

Please see our responses to your questions, below:

1. [What specific steps has Windstream taken to respond to the increase in broadband usage in Georgia due to the coronavirus pandemic?](#)

*Windstream moved quickly to minimize the impact of the pandemic on our ability to serve our customers. As a result of these actions, since the beginning of March, a record 15,400 of our Georgia customers have been upgraded or had service installed in response to the demand for greater broadband access. To allow implementation of these services, we instituted home-garaging for technicians and equipped call center employees to work from home, minimizing contact among team members. We are working daily to ensure that our technicians have access to the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they need to keep them and our customers safe while still meeting the increased demand for speed upgrades and new connections.*

*Additionally, Windstream's Network Operations group is closely monitoring demand levels across our core transport network. As a result of enhancements Windstream made over the past few years, there is no congestion on this critical layer of the network, which carries broadband traffic from local communities to the wider internet.*

2. [Does Windstream's plan to address increased usage due to the pandemic include upgrades for consumers living in more rural areas?](#)

*As the result of the upgrades mentioned above, Windstream has the ability to increase bandwidth for many of our rural customers. However, while core capacity is not an issue, subscribed speeds and in-home Wi-Fi configurations can pose problems for some customers. Windstream is aware of these customer needs and continues to provide speed upgrades and expanded Wi-Fi options. In terms of expanding broadband coverage, this pandemic has made it more evident than ever that every home needs a high-speed internet connection to support education and telehealth.*

*We are hopeful that government-funded broadband programs, like the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction, scheduled to take place later this year, will help Windstream and other rural telecommunications providers meet these needs. We believe the FCC's focus on improving broadband maps to clearly identify where funds should be deployed will help solve this problem. We remain committed to working with*

*our state and federal government partners to ensure that rural Americans have access to the same broadband services and online resources as those in urban areas.*

3. Are you charging consumers for equipment upgrades that are necessary to meet access demands during this time?

*Equipment upgrades and potential costs are determined based on the customer's current product subscription and upgrade needs. Windstream has multiple promotions to help offset any potential costs for customers upgrade needs during the pandemic.*

4. Which of Windstream's service areas in Georgia have been upgraded due to the outbreak?

*All of our Georgia customers benefit from past enhancements made to the core transport network. We are working creatively to deliver service to those who do not currently have it.*

5. How is Windstream responding to complaints by consumers during this time? What is the timeframe in which consumers experiencing accessibility issues can expect a response from your company?

*As mentioned above, all of our domestic call center employees are "work from home" enabled, and our Care and Repair centers are operating business as usual, assisting customers as needs arise. We also have several online self-service tools available primarily through our primary residential MyWIN portal, and we respond to requests made through social media. Our complaints division complies with all applicable governmental response requirements.*

6. Has Windstream implemented any new policies or procedures to assist those who have been furloughed or laid-off as a result of COVID-19 and are struggling to pay their bills?

*Windstream has signed the FCC's Keep Americans Connected pledge. For the sixty days from March 13, Windstream will not suspend service to residential and small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills specifically due to disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. During this time, Windstream will also waive any late fees because of customers' economic circumstances specifically related to the coronavirus pandemic. Customers finding themselves in need of this assistance should contact Windstream to discuss available options. We are also offering discounts, including two months of free service, to any new Kinetic Internet customer who is qualified for [Lifeline benefits](#).*

*In addition, Kinetic Business and Windstream Enterprise are helping businesses of all sizes work remotely during this crisis. Until June 30, Windstream Enterprise is offering a free 90-day trial of OfficeSuite UC for mobility and HD Meeting for video and audio collaboration. Details are available at [www.windstreamenterprise.com](http://www.windstreamenterprise.com). Until June 30, Kinetic Business will offer a free 90-day trial of HD Meeting to small and medium-sized businesses for video and audio collaboration.*

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These are challenging and unprecedented times, and Windstream appreciates your continued support. We look forward to working with you to ensure that your constituents and our customers stay connected for the duration of this crisis and beyond.

Please direct your constituents to reach out to us at 1-800-347-1991 or via [www.windstream.com](http://www.windstream.com) to discuss upgrade options and other service issues. If you have additional questions, please feel free to reach out to J Berkshire, President, Georgia Operations ([J.Berkshire@windstream.com](mailto:J.Berkshire@windstream.com)) and Michael Foor, Vice President, State Government Affairs ([Michael.Foor@windstream.com](mailto:Michael.Foor@windstream.com)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tony Thomas

cc: Mr. J Berkshire  
Mr. Michael Foor  
Mr. Thomas Whitehead