

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Hearing on “Repurposing the C-Band to Benefit All Americans”  
October 29, 2019

Today, we are discussing how to reallocate the C-band in a way that benefits all consumers and helps us invest in connecting more Americans to better technology. C-band spectrum is essential mid-band spectrum that can be used to speed up our efforts to implement new wireless technologies.

Currently, this spectrum is underutilized but it is not unused—right now, in fact, it hosts satellite services that provide important services across the country, including the delivery of news and entertainment content to rural America.

In July, we had a hearing to discuss the country’s spectrum needs where we discussed C-band at length, and we heard from a group of satellite service providers called the C-Band Alliance. The Alliance advocated for taking the lead in selling the spectrum privately to wireless carriers of their choosing. They made the argument that a private sale may make the spectrum available for 5G faster than a public auction would. I don’t think that’s necessarily true, and what’s more, the proceeds from that sale would mostly go to the foreign satellite companies that make up the Alliance. Their recent offer to make a voluntary payment to the treasury from their multi-billion-dollar private sale raise novel enforcement and transparency issues.

This would be an unprecedented departure from the way Congress has instructed the FCC to reallocate spectrum in the past. Under the Communications Act, we required the FCC to run auctions that provide revenues to the Treasury, which is critical to ensuring the American people benefit from these auctions. And the revenues could go a long way in helping us invest in high-speed broadband in unserved and underserved areas and Next Generation 9-1-1 service, as we do in the LIFT America Act. Some estimates indicate the C-Band auction could yield as much as \$60 billion to fund those priorities.

A public auction conducted by the FCC would also ensure that the process is fair, transparent, and competitive. Furthermore, the FCC has the experience and the expertise to carry out this auction—after all, it has conducted over 100 public spectrum auctions that have already earned \$120 billion.

Last week, Chairman Doyle, and Representatives Johnson, Matsui, and Gianforte introduced the C-BAND Act, which would require the FCC to conduct a public auction of the C-band. I’ll let them explain it, but this bipartisan effort is a powerful step toward using our public airwaves to benefit all Americans.

We can't afford to delay making this important spectrum available for 5G, and we cannot afford to give away billions of dollars that could be used for improving public safety and connecting Americans to broadband.