



**Opening Statement of Chairwoman Renee Ellmers
Subcommittee on Healthcare and Technology
“Broadband: A Catalyst for Small Business Growth”
February 15, 2012**

Good afternoon. I call this hearing to order.

I want to thank the witnesses for testifying today. We appreciate your participation in this important hearing.

Access to broadband service has the potential to transform the way small businesses and organizations fundamentally operate. Small firms can communicate with potential buyers around the world; family farmers can better monitor and manage crop prices; and entrepreneurs can launch a website or application from their living room. As a registered nurse and small business owner, I fully understand the benefits of a modern health care facility with broadband access. Most importantly, broadband provides the gateway and opportunity for economic growth and job creation - especially in rural areas.

While it is easy to understand the limitless benefits of broadband Internet, those capabilities would not be available if not for the contributions of small business providers like those represented here today. To keep up with the growing demand, private sector enterprises have invested billions of dollars to upgrade their network to provide faster and more reliable services. It is because of these investments that we can enjoy broadband at the workplace or on a wireless device.

However, there is still a severe shortage of network infrastructure that limits many small businesses from utilizing broadband services. In particular, rural areas of states are most likely to lack the necessary capabilities, as they can be difficult and expensive to develop. This is the reason I introduced H.R. 2128, Stripping the E-Prescribe Arbitrary Mandate Act of 2011, which would prevent the federal government from imposing penalties and fees on health care providers who are not yet able to e-Prescribe.

Currently, there are a variety of federal initiatives aimed at providing broadband to everyone in the United States. When considering these policies, we must first ensure that the regulatory changes do not diminish the incentive for private sector investment in broadband infrastructure. Moreover, we must strengthen our oversight of various programs to confirm that federal dollars are being spent efficiently, and will benefit small businesses in rural areas.

We have distinguished panel of witnesses here today. I look forward to hearing their thoughts on the importance of broadband and how best to provide broadband to small businesses across the United States.

I now yield to Ranking Member Richmond for his opening statement.