



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 9, 2009

Contact:
J.E. Smith
316.219.8500
jsmith@pixius.com

Technology infrastructure improvement vital to success in efforts to provide rural healthcare

Kansas-based broadband provider testifies today before HHS secretary about access to broadband technology in rural areas

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Preserving access to healthcare in rural areas can only be achieved through further deployment of broadband technology, according to testimony presented Tuesday to the Department of Health and Human Services by Jay Maxwell, Chief Executive Officer of Pixius Communications, a Wichita-based data communications company that serves a number of Kansas communities.

“Every day across rural America, diseases and treatments are being managed via telemedicine,” Maxwell added. “Limitations caused by shortcomings in existing technology infrastructure are barriers we need to remove. I’m encouraged that leading federal agencies are rolling up their sleeves and asking those of us on the front lines of the rural technology community for advice and input as they work to maximize the value of the important investments being made. For those depending on technology to access treatment information, it can literally mean a life-saving difference.”

In order to bridge these gaps in technology, it is essential that broadband service availability is analyzed accurately. President Obama has called for significant improvements in the availability of broadband internet service in rural America and in order to maximize the dollars spent in this effort, we must accurately determine what are underserved or not served at all. “By doing this, you will pave the way toward more effectively delivering healthcare to rural America,” according to Maxwell.

~ more ~



“While the information superhighway is alive and well-traveled in most cities and urban population centers, our smaller farm communities are still waiting for the infrastructure to reach them,” stated Maxwell. “What’s at stake is not just a luxury or faster internet speeds. Instead it can mean the difference between having access to healthcare and other vital services that this important technology allows rural communities to survive.”

During his testimony, Maxwell urged federal officials to make maximum use of funding available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) by making sure there is a coordinated strategy for deployment of these dollars in rural areas, both for analysis of the current system as well as upgrades in underserved areas.

“In Kansas, nearly 30 percent of the population is classified as rural,” Maxwell stated. “Yet, only 4 percent of physicians serve in these areas. This critical problem of shrinking rural healthcare is only exacerbated by the increasing age of our rural population. In short, at the very time folks need care the most, they are confronted with a significant – and often insurmountable – disparity in access to healthcare.

“Federal agencies who have been tasked with deploying these ARRA funds for broadband deployment can best address rural needs if they are strategic in linking investments in telemedicine with the overall goal of bringing high speed access to areas not currently served. Only through such a coordinated approach can we be assured that medically underserved areas in America are given an opportunity to use technology to help bridge the healthcare delivery gap that threatens their existence.”

Maxwell was asked to address the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services at its meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota. The forum on rural health was convened by former Kansas Governor and now Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius.

#