

January 19, 2018  
Members, Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: MY STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE LIFELINE PROGRAM, WC DOCKET NUMBERS 17-287, 11- 42, 09-197

Dear Commissioner,

The ability to effectively communicate with the world outside of your home is of the utmost importance. It is for this reason that I support a robust Lifeline program and I urge you to reject the proposals to decimate the program which are currently before you. The Lifeline program was initiated in 1985 by President Ronald Reagan to help bring telecommunication capabilities to all Americans and to provide subsidized basic phone service for low-income consumers.

Lifeline is a program that has worked: the percentage of low-income households with phone service has increased from 80% in 1985, when Lifeline began, to nearly 92% in 2011. In 2005 the Lifeline program was expanded by President George W. Bush to include wireless service. Beginning in December, 2017, the Lifeline program was scheduled to transition from telephone-only to include broadband internet services within a five-year period. The expansion to broadband would have helped these low-income Americans not only stay in touch, it would have helped close the digital divide. The typical Lifeline subscriber makes just \$14,000 per year; currently, nearly 13 million low income Americans use Lifeline. It is because of Lifeline that more American seniors can call their loved ones, neighbors, or emergency services in the event of a mishap. Lifeline allows subscribers to speak with their child's educators. It is because of Lifeline that workers can stay on top of their fulltime, or multiple part-time, shift schedules. Lifeline has enabled Veterans to access the health, educational, and financial benefits to which they are entitled. For low-income families, a telephone is a key connection to education and economic opportunities, and safety during times of emergencies.

Current proposals would harm the Lifeline program by:

- eliminating service for approximately 75 percent of current participants, particularly mobile services;
- restricting voice service support to only low-income households in rural areas;
- install a lifetime cap on Lifeline recipients;
- place an overall budget cap on the Lifeline program; and Please act to protect Lifeline and reject these draconian proposals.

I urge you to further promote Lifeline so that all Americans may have access to communication. Thank you for hearing my views.

Sincerely,

*Doria E. Hillsman*