



National Association of
American **Veterans**[™]

*Serving Our Nation's Service Members and Veterans
with Honor and Respect*

November 9, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman
The Honorable Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner
The Honorable Michael O'Rielly, Commissioner
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Bridging the Digital Divide for Low-Income Consumers, WC Docket No. 17-287; Lifeline Link Up Reform and Modernization, WC Docket No. 11-42; Telecommunications Carriers Eligible for Universal Service, WC Docket No. 09-197

Dear Chairman Pai, and Commissioners Clyburn, O'Rielly, Carr & Rosenworcel:

As executive director of the National Association of American Veterans, I witness first hand how our veterans and military families count on the services they receive from the Lifeline program. Every day – on our website and in our community outreach efforts - NAAV helps educate members of the Veteran and military community about federal programs that may assist them; I help many find and register for Lifeline and other programs. I am writing today to urge you to reject the proposal by Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai to change the Lifeline program for qualifying low-income. Chairman Pai's proposal would ban four of the five largest wireless Lifeline providers that currently serve the vast majority of people in the program. To paraphrase FCC Commissioner Clyburn's tweet, "Telling 7 million Americans that they'll no longer be able to use the Lifeline provider of their choice is simply a backwards form of government paternalism" – we agree! This proposal will weaken Lifeline, and hurt veterans, their families and millions of others who use the program.

An estimated 10-13 percent of current wireless Lifeline beneficiaries are veterans of U.S. military service according to filings at the FCC. The Lifeline program helps provide an essential need to individuals who have served or are currently serving our country. Many of our service members depend on federal benefits programs like Lifeline. The GAO found that nearly 1 in 4 children at DOD schools are eligible for free meals. Also, about 23,000 active-duty service members rely on SNAP benefits, according to the 2013 Census. These same service members deserve to be able to participate in a strong, viable, Lifeline program. For these reasons, and on behalf of veterans and military families, we are writing to ask you to reject the recent Draft Lifeline Item released by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) in advance of the November 16, 2017 Open Meeting. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Constance A. Burns
CEO and Veterans Service Officer
Executive Director, NAAV Military Family Program