



President
Robert Roach, Jr.

Secretary-Treasurer
Joseph Peters, Jr.

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, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner O’Rielly, Commissioner Carr, and Commissioner Rosenworcel:


On behalf of our 4.4 million members, 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. This Lifeline item as currently drafted will destroy Lifeline’s promise to bring affordable communications services to many of our constituents, including the elderly, low-income households, Tribal households, veterans and people with disabilities.

As we have stated in past letters and filings, the FCC should not restrict access to federal wireless Lifeline, which often is inaccurately referred to as the “Obamaphone” program. A 2014 survey conducted by ORC International (ORC) and released by Alliance for Retired Americans makes it clear that seven out of 10 seniors believe they should continue to get access to wireless Lifeline and other benefits that have been promised to them. A large number of older Americans on fixed incomes benefit from the **wireless Lifeline** program. It is their connection to health care, part-time work, needed community services, and law enforcement help. These are exactly the kind of people that **wireless Lifeline** was set up to serve.

We agree with other advocates who have said that, “Just as Lifeline was set to catch up with the 21st century, this Draft Lifeline Item will put access to affordable broadband further out of the reach for low-income households.” The Draft Item also limits providers. Here, the Commission’s proposed actions will have direct and far-reaching consequences for the almost 70 percent of current Lifeline recipients who rely on service from non-facilities based providers. Removing non-facilities based providers will stifle both competition and choice in the program and severely reduce Lifeline options in all fifty states, Tribal lands, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands, for the nearly 45 million households and over 126 million people eligible for Lifeline.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Commission retract this Draft Lifeline Item.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Fiesta
Executive Director