



September 30, 2015

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Lifeline Modernization, WC Docket No. 11-42

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We are writing on behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the undersigned organizations and companies that work directly with and advocate for low-income people, seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, educators, and historically disenfranchised people. While our work in these diverse communities varies, each of our organizations can point to the importance of broadband Internet access as a vital tool for our constituents. Yet the digital divide between those who have a broadband Internet connection and those who do not continues to persist. Cost remains a critical barrier. For this reason, we write to support the Federal Communications Commission's proposal to modernize the Lifeline program this year by including in it, for the first time, a subsidy to defray the cost of broadband access for low-income households.

Access to broadband enables access to education and job opportunities, invaluable health information, and social services. Broadband is essential for anyone who goes to school or seeks to further enhance their skills. Seven in ten teachers assign homework that requires the Internet and yet 5 million households with children don't have home access, leading to a "homework gap."¹ Obtaining a job without access to the kinds of training programs or education available online that can help jobseekers upgrade skills in the modern economy is a daunting proposition. And more than 80 percent of Fortune 500 companies, including companies like Wal-Mart and Target, only accept job applications online.² The effectiveness of federal and state programs and health care providers to assist seniors, veterans and people with disabilities would improve dramatically if all those populations could communicate via broadband. And despite libraries' Herculean efforts to serve the unserved, nearly seven out of 10 public libraries report they do not have enough computers to meet demand all or some part of the day.³

Though Internet access is a tool that has revolutionized almost every sector and every part of our personal lives, substantial numbers of people still do not have access. While 92 percent

Officers
Chair
Judith L. Lichtman
National Partnership for
Women & Families
Vice Chairs
Jacqueline Pata
National Congress of American Indians
Thomas A. Saenz
Mexican American Legal
Defense and Educational Fund
Hillary Shellon
NAACP
Treasurer
Lee A. Saunders
American Federation of State,
County & Municipal Employees

Board of Directors
Barbara Arnwine
Lawyers' Committee for
Civil Rights Under Law
Helena Berger
American Association of
People with Disabilities
Cornell William Brooks
NAACP
Lily Eskelsen Garcia
National Education Association
Marcia D. Greenberger
National Women's Law Center
Chad Griffin
Human Rights Campaign
Linda D. Hallman
AAUW
Mary Kay Henry
Service Employees International Union
Sherrilyn Ifill
NAACP Legal Defense and
Educational Fund, Inc.
Jo Ann Jenkins
AARP
Michael B. Keegan
People for the American Way
Samer E. Khalaf, Esq.
American-Arab
Anti-Discrimination Committee
Elisabeth MacNamara
League of Women Voters of the
United States
Marc Morial
National Urban League
Mee Moua
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
AAJC
Janet Murguía
National Council of La Raza
Debra Ness
National Partnership for
Women & Families
Terry O'Neill
National Organization for Women
Priscilla Ouchida
Japanese American Citizens League
Rabbi Jonah Pesner
Religious Action Center
Of Reform Judaism
Anthony Romero
American Civil Liberties Union
Shanna Smith
National Fair Housing Alliance
Richard L. Trumka
AFL-CIO
Randi Weingarten
American Federation of Teachers
Dennis Williams
International Union, UAW

Policy and Enforcement
Committee Chair
Michael Lieberman
Anti-Defamation League
President & CEO
Wade J. Henderson
Executive Vice President & COO
Karen McGill Lawson



of households with incomes between \$100,000 and \$150,000 have broadband service, the adoption rate is only:

- 47 percent for households with income below \$25,000;⁴
- 64 percent for African Americans and 53 percent for Hispanics;⁵
- 63 percent for people with disabilities;⁶
- 56 percent for people age 65 and over;⁷
- 51 percent for people with limited English proficiency;⁸
- 38 percent for households that prefer Spanish.⁹

Cost is often cited as one of the most important reasons households do not have, or lose, their broadband subscriptions.¹⁰ The federal Lifeline program can alleviate this costly burden.

We urge you to modernize the Lifeline program this year to include broadband and ensure that all people in the U.S. have fair access to modern and essential communications services.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
2 God B The Glory, Inc., Supportive Housing
9to5, National Association of Working Women
ACCSES
AIDS Project Los Angeles
Almost Home, Inc.
Arizona Asian American Association
Arizona Community Action Association
Ashbury Senior Computer Community Center
Asian American Psychological Association
Asian and Latino Community Services, Inc.
Asian Law Alliance
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor
Austin Free - Net
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Axiom Technologies
AYUDA, Inc.
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore
Bethany Community Services, Inc.
Bethel Community

Brain Injury Association of America
Bronx Jewish Community Council, Inc.
Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition
Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation, Inc. (CANAR, Inc.)
Casa Major, Inc.
Cascade AIDS Project
Community Development Corporation Resource Consortium, Inc. (CDCRC Inc.)
Center for Independent Living of South Jersey, Inc.
Chelan-Douglas Community Action
Chicago House and Social Service Agency
Child Care Aware of America
Child Care Council of Suffolk Inc.
Children First Family Child Care
Church Women United in New York State
Claire Heureuse Community Center, Inc.
Clarity of Mind Counseling
Cleveland Housing Network
Common Sense Kids Action
Community Action of Skagit County
Community Action Partnership
Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho

Community Development Authority of
Marshfield, Wisconsin
Community Power Network of NYS
Conference of Educational Administrators of
Schools and Programs for the Deaf
Connecting for Good
Crossroads Urban Center
Connecticut Association for Community Action
Daughters of Charity
G III Associates
God's Will In Action
Good Shepherd Community
Graceworks Housing Services
Graceworks Lutheran Services
Groundcover News
Hawaii County Economic Opportunity Council
Homeless & Housing Coalition of Kentucky
Housing and Education Alliance
Human Facets International
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Hunger Free Vermont
Illinois Felician Associates
IMPRUVE Paratransit Riders
International Arts/Humanities Institute
Justice in Aging
Lake County Minority Health Organization
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Lopez Community Land Trust
Madison Social Services
Manchester Community Technologies, Inc.
Martha O'Bryan Center
Matrix Human Services
Media Alliance
Medical Mission Sisters
Mental Health America
Midland Development Corporation
Military Assistance Project
Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church
National Asian Pacific American Families
Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA)
National Alliance on Mental Illness North
Carolina
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of States United for Aging
and Disabilities
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans
(NCAPA)
National Council on Aging
National Digital Inclusion Alliance
National Disability Rights Network
National PTA
Nazareth Housing Inc.
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice
Lobby
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and
Addiction Agencies, Inc.
New York State Community Action Association
Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, Inc.
Northwest Health Law Advocates
NY State Council of Churches
OCA National Center
OCA - Georgia, Greater Chicago, Greater
Houston, Greater Seattle, Wisconsin, DC, and
Long Island Chapters
Ohio Community Leadership Council
Oklahoma State University Cooperative
Extension
Partners Bridging the Digital Divide
PathWays PA
People for Public Toilets Coalition
PeterCares House
Pittsburgh Labor Council for Latin American
Advancement
Placer Independent Resource Services
Preservation of Affordable Housing
Provincial Council of the Clerics of St. Viator
(Viatorians)
Public Justice Center
Public Knowledge
RESULTS
Safe Home Program, YWCA Hanover,
Pennsylvania
Salaam Legal Network & Citizens Council for
Human Rights
Senior Legislative Action Committee of Sullivan
County New York



Senior Service America, Inc.
Servants of Jesus, Michigan
Shepherds Heart
Sisters of Charity Federation
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, Leadership
Team
St. Paul Trinity Community
Tech Goes Home
Teens, Training, and Taxes
Torrance County Project Office
Trinity Community
United Spinal Association
UPTE-CWA 9119
Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio

United States Society for Augmentative and
Alternative Communication (USSAAC)
Utahns Against Hunger
Vecinos Unidos, Inc.
Veterans For Peace-NYC Chapter 34
West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition
Westside Center for Independent Living
WinstonNet
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Young Invincibles
Youth Policy Institute
YWCA Central Alabama
YWCA of the Greater Capital Region (NY), Inc.

¹ Common Sense Kids Action Policy Brief, *The Benefits of Broadband Expansion to America's Economy, Education and Health* (June 2015).

² Gerry Smith, *Without Internet, Urban Poor Fear Being Left Behind*, Huffington Post (March 2012).

³ American Library Association, *Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study* (2011-2012).

⁴ File, Thom and Camille Ryan, *Computer and Internet Use in the United States: 2013*, American Community Survey Reports, ACS-28, U.S. Census Bureau, Table 1 (2014) (ACS 2013).

⁵ Zickuhr, Kathryn and Aaron Smith, *Home Broadband 2013*, Pew Research Center at 3 (Aug 2013).

⁶ ACS 2013 at Table 1.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Lee Rainie, Director, Pew Internet and American Life Project, Presentation at Washington Post Live 2013 Bridging the Digital Divide forum (Nov. 5, 2013).

¹⁰ Aaron Smith, Pew Research Center, *U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015* (April 2015).