Chairman Wheeler:

I have an idea for your Commission's consideration.

My 85-yr old mother has been an existing subscriber of the LIFELINE telephone discount program for several years. She submits her signed applications each year on the first possible day by mail, but this year for the first time, her application was returned as "incomplete". She initialed some questions and resubmitted her application. This time it went through fine.

When we received her Dec. telephone bill this afternoon, we found out that Mom was no longer eligible for Lifeline. After calls to Verizon and DC government, we found out that Mom's 2nd application was pre-approved Dec. 1, 2015 but since it fell in the next billing cycle without final authorization by Verizon, Mom is stuck paying a bill 6x the cost of her average bill on Lifeline. Merry Christmas, Mom, at a time when you should be celebrating the season rather than worrying about unanticipated expenses.

As far as Lifeline subscribers, low income seniors' financial picture is not likely to change significantly at 85 the way younger, employable or even married adults may.

Immediate disqualification of senior applicants without a "grace period" is shortsighted. Where is an accommodation for our aging to allow time for a mistake to be fixed? Seniors are more likely to be confused or make mistakes especially if completing applications alone. Why must the FCC assume guilty until proven innocent? Rather, re-certifying seniors should be given the benefit of the doubt and additional time if they submit applications on time in order to get them fixed before declaring them ineligible.

If it turns out the senior applicant is ineligible for Lifeline, the phone

carrier will bill the past due amounts to be paid in full. But if the fixed application ends up being re-certified, our seniors won't be penalized unnecessarily.

Maintaining 24/7 communications by telephone between seniors and their families or friends is imperative to their safety and well-being. When seniors like my mother rely only on fixed income of social security, it's tough.

As I sat on the phone all afternoon trying to get this straightened out, Mom came downstairs to sew up the waistband in her underwear that was coming apart. How's that for conservation- a lost art on our generation perhaps. ☺

Although Mom has been re-certified, the approval is lost between DC Government and Verizon. An investigation has been launched but it will take 7 - 10 business days for a response. Fortunately, Verizon agreed to delay the payment's due date until Jan. 14 to give us more time to get everything settled. Yes, Carolyn, there is a Santa Claus.

Mr. Wheeler, all I can think of is the many seniors across this country with no one to advocate for them who may be facing just what Mom is.

We can do better than this. We are the United States, for better and for worse. I'm writing because I believe we can and should do better.

Happy Holidays,
Carolyn A. Cook
"The Maverick Spinster"
Flying Solo to improve public policies for our human family