

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on CC Docket Nos. 96-45 and 94-21, DA 99-521. As Director of Oregon's Office of Rural Health and a member of the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH), I am very interested in the implementation of this potentially beneficial program. The USAC recommendations are very promising, and I would respectfully request that they be examined in detail by a special task force, to include representation from NOSORH, affected rural health providers and local telephone service providers.

The Universal Services Program could be greatly enhanced by (1) simplifying the rate calculation by making it a percentage of the telephone bill instead of having to calculate the difference between urban and rural; and (2) simplifying that application process so that telcos do not have to be involved. In Oregon, approved applicants are experiencing delays because their telcos are either unwilling or unable to complete the necessary applications.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Karen Whitaker, Director  
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