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CONSUMER COUNCIL

JUN 1 2000

May 24, 2000

FCC MAIL ROOM

Magalie Roman-Salas  
Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW, Room TW-B-204  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **Exparte comments on Docket Nos. 94-1, 96-45, 96-262 & 99-249**

Dear Secretary Roman-Salas:

I wanted to take the opportunity to comment on the access reform proposal before the Commission known as CALLS. As a consumer advocate, I thought it was important to join the ranks of groups from around the country voicing their support for this pro-consumer, forward thinking proposal.

The Pennsylvania Citizens Consumer Council, organized in 1975, monitors government agencies charged with the protection of consumer interests and the Pennsylvania General Assembly in its implementation of consumer legislation. The Council takes positions on consumer legislation and regulatory matters and testifies before state agencies and the General Assembly on such issues. We are actively involved in consumer education and share information nationally through our newsletters and other publications.

In Pennsylvania, we have a mix of urban centers and rural communities with one of the nation's largest rural populations. Telephone service and the Internet are an integral part of our economy, not to mention community structure. Because of the importance of keeping telephone service affordable and accessible for all Americans, we decided to review this proposal. Based on our review, we support it, in part because it:

- \* Expands the universal service fund by \$650 million to help keep basic telephone rates affordable in high cost and rural areas;
- \* Reduces per-minute access charges by \$2.1 billion to help lower the cost of long distance telephone calls, very important in a heavily rural state;
- \* Exempts Lifeline customers from paying the Subscriber Line Charge and the local Universal Service Fund charge, and,
- \* Reduces the cost of having multiple telephone lines by phasing out higher monthly per-line charges for additional lines.

We are also pleased that AT&T responded to complaints from other advocates and has agreed to waive the \$3 monthly minimum it charges on its basic residential plan. Callers who make \$1 in calls a month must now pay an additional \$2. This agreement, alone, will help millions of consumers save millions of dollars.

The telecommunications marketplace has changed greatly, while the way we charge consumers for these services has not. The CALLS access reform proposal is a needed step in the right direction. As an organization that conducts consumer education through publications, workshops, seminars and public presentations to a variety of

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groups and organizations, I encourage you to ensure that the companies conduct the consumer campaigns to educate everyone about these changes. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Louis S. Meyer, PhD  
President, PCCC

cc: Chairman William E. Kennard  
Commissioner Susan Ness  
Commissioner Michael Powell  
Commissioner Gloria Tristani  
Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth