



October 24, 2008

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
c/o Natek, Inc., Inc.
236 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.
Suite 110
Washington, DC 20002

RE: WC Docket 03-109 and CC Docket 96-45

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The National Caucus and Center on Black Aged (NCBA) has represented the interests of the black elderly in the U.S. since 1970. It is in this role that NCBA offers the following comments in support of a petition presented by TracFone Wireless, Inc. to establish a trial Broadband Lifeline/Link-Up program in the states of Florida, Virginia, D.C. and Tennessee. The petition sets a path to which universal access to broadband may finally be reached.

For older Americans broadband access means a higher quality of life. At an age when it becomes more difficult to travel, broadband services can keep elderly family members connected with their loved ones. It can provide opportunities for continuing education and employment. Perhaps most importantly, it can offer access to potentially life-saving health applications.

NCBA believes that all Americans deserve affordable high-speed Internet and those living on low or fixed incomes should have equal access to the benefits of broadband and broadband applications. Currently the cost of broadband makes it difficult or impossible for older Americans on limited incomes to afford internet services, let alone broadband. In 2006, only about one-fifth of all adults over the age of 65 were online.¹ And as the TracFone petition notes, a recent study published by the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that only twenty-five percent of households with annual incomes below \$20,000 have broadband service, as compared with fifty-five percent of all households.²

¹ Older Americans, Broadband and the Future of the Net, SeniorNet, 2008.

² Home Broadband Adoption 2008, Pew Internet & American Life Project, July 2008 at 3.

African Americans lag behind in adopting broadband and NCBA feels this proposal would do much in the way of reaching older black Americans that do not currently have access to broadband. The states proposed for the pilot program; particularly Florida, which has the largest senior population in the country and the District of Columbia, which has the highest percentage of African Americans; represent NCBA's constituents as well as those most in need of a broadband support.

A trial program, modeled after the existing USF Lifeline program for telephone service, provides a reasonable implementation plan. The pilot can then be studied, evaluated and drawn from to develop a nationwide Broadband Lifeline/Link-Up program.

As telecommunication services continue to evolve we must ensure that older Americans and those living on low or fixed incomes are not left behind. NCBA commends TracFone for recognizing that broadband access should be affordable for all and for taking an important step towards making this a reality.

Respectfully submitted by,

Karyne Jones

Karyne Jones
President & CEO
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged