

February 24, 2011

Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up  
CC Docket No. 96-45; WC Docket 03-109**

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

I am writing today to show my support for the efforts of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and Lifeline and Link Up. The Lifeline program provides an invaluable service to low-income constituents in my district and across the country. I think it is important to look for ways to minimize fraud, waste and abuse in the program so that deserving and qualified families will still have access to this vital program, and I'm applaud the Board for doing so.

The Lifeline program is more invaluable than ever, with our nation struggling to overcome unemployment and other economic challenges. Reports both academic and anecdotal have shown that access to phone service leads to greater chances of employment, and are more likely to stay employed. And my district, and our nation's, residents should be able to access these services in the case of an emergency.

I agree unequivocally with the Board's recommendations that the Commission put together a plan for standardization on areas that would apply to all Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) that would help eliminate waste and abuse in this program. In doing so, however, I want to make sure that low-income support of the fund remains strong. I am adamant that the program remains free and accessible to those who qualify because it is such a beneficial program to my constituents.

Low-income support is cyclical and this should be acknowledged. As you may be aware, unemployment has been increasing in my state since 2008 and those eligible for SNAP assistance has as well. In these challenging economic times, programs such as Lifeline have a real and tangible impact on the lives of my constituents, and I believe the Commission to recognize this, too. As this recession begins to regress, the numbers of those eligible for Lifeline should as well.

I hope you will take seriously the recommendations of the Federal-State Joint Board, and understand the urgency of this pressing matter. A main concern of mine is that the Commission should not adopt policies that cap funding for low-income support or hinder competition in an already underserved market. For example, the FCC should not mandate (even minimal) monthly subscriber fees for Lifeline users, which would present an unnecessary administrative burden on both carriers and consumers. The best approach to curtailing fraud and abuse is establishment of an eligibility database. I appreciate you considering my views and concerns on an issue of utmost importance to my community and our country.

**Model Letter 2**

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Re: **Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up  
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Dear Chairman Genachowski,

The Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up recently provided its recommendations to the FCC. We support the efforts by the Joint Board to address the issues concerning Lifeline and Link Up. As our country continues to rise from the worst economic recession since *The Great Depression*, free Lifeline service is fundamental to low-income families and their struggle to stay connected to their families, potential employers and above all, emergencies.

I support the Board's recommendation that the Commission should look for ways to adopt regularity on areas such as verification procedures and sampling criteria that would apply to all Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) in order to minimize waste, fraud and abuse. However, one area of concern is the discussion of capping low-income support. Historically, the low-income support of the fund has had a very low penetration rate and while cost has grown in the low-income support, it is still minimal compared to the area of High Cost. Similarly, it makes little sense to consider adding mandatory (even minimal) monthly subscriber fees for Lifeline users, which would present an unnecessary administrative burden on both carriers and consumers. The best approach to decreasing fraud and abuse is establishment of an eligibility database.

Please keep in mind that low-income support is cyclical. During a time of economic downturn, such as so many are seeing now, enrollment will be higher. As the economy improves and employment rises, there will be less need for enrollment. This service can help provide the necessary tools that so many struggling individuals need to get back on their feet.

We urge the Commission to consider these recommendations outlined in the report. However, the Commission should not adopt measures or practices that hinder the Lifeline subscriber such as capping support or adopt policies that limit competition in a market that has been largely ignored for decades.

Sincerely,

*Perry E. Thurston, Jr.*

Representative Perry E. Thurston, Jr.  
Florida House of Representatives, District 93

