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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

February 15, 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,

First and foremost, we as members of the Kentucky General Assembly would like to commend the efforts of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and Lifeline and Link Up. Since the introduction of this program, low-income and rural populations in our Commonwealth and across the nation have been able to benefit from the helpful telecommunications services provided by Lifeline. We would also like to commend the board on its decision to cut waste, abuse and fraud within the program, so that it can continue to provide access to underprivileged families in an even more efficient manner.

America is struggling to overcome many economic challenges including a skyrocketing unemployment rate. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the unemployment rate here in Kentucky is at 10%. That's higher than the national average and 39 other states. Statewide statistics show that the unemployment rate is higher now than it has been in decades and more of my constituents find themselves relying on government assistance for the first time in their lives.

Academic studies have shown that access to phone service leads to greater chances of employment. The Lifeline program has been essential in helping people contact employers, inquire about job opportunities, and receive updates on application statuses. The program also gives families a way to contact family members and get help in case of an emergency. In the current economic climate, it's more crucial than ever.

While this program provides many benefits, there is certainly a need to help eliminate waste and abuse in this program, so we agree with the Board's recommendation that the Commission put together a plan for uniformity in areas that would apply to all Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs). However, we fear that some of our constituents may lose access to Lifeline in the process. As elected

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officials, we want to make sure that low-income support of the fund remains in tact and that the program remains free and accessible to those who qualify. As more people qualify for government assistance, it is important that we keep programs like Lifeline active until our economy strengthens.

I urge the Commission to adopt the recommendations from the Federal-State Joint Board, without jeopardizing funding for low-income support or hindering competition in an already underserved market. For example, the FCC should not mandate monthly subscriber fees for Lifeline users, which would only add an unnecessary administrative burden to carriers and consumers. The FCC should instead establish eligibility database which is the best approach to curtailing fraud.

Thank you for your continued service to my constituents and our country. I hope that any proposed changes to the Lifeline program will only strengthen and not hinder this vital program.

Sincerely,

W. Keith Hale

[Signature]

[Large block of handwritten signatures and scribbles, including names like "D. St-60", "Royce W. Johnson", "John C. Filling", "P. Keane", "Robert R. Jammer", "Larry Clark", "Walt D. ...", "Carl P. ...", "John A. ...", "John C. ..."]

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