State of Maine
House of Representatives
2 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0002

April 20th, 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; WC Docket 11-42

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

Thank you for your leadership in addressing issues affecting the Lifeline program at the March 3rd FCC meeting. In these trying economic times, these programs are extremely important to our constituents and their families. I applaud your efforts to both increase participation in these programs and reform them to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse.

As a member of the Maine House of Representatives we are acutely aware of how important the Lifeline program is to low income Mainers.

The majority of the FCC's proposed reforms were both reasonable and, we believe, ultimately beneficial to both the LifeLine program and its users. However, there were three proposed changes that we believe would have an immediate and deleterious impact on the users of Lifeline services.

The FCC proposed a "minimum charge", either a monthly fee or one time enrollment fee, to participate in wireless Lifeline programs. In addition, the FCC recommended the elimination of "self-certification" in the Lifeline program that would force enrollees to provide onerous proof of poverty, essentially.

We know firsthand the people who rely on such a valuable program and I believe that these proposals, especially when combined, present an enormous barrier to entry to the program. This unnecessary barrier is aimed at *exactly* the type of end user these programs should be reaching and have been reaching in recent years. To both require that someone prove that they are poor ("low-income" in the parlance of the FCC) and ask them to pay a fee to receive services that their poverty qualifies them for, is perverse and unreasonable. These programs have been successful in recent years because they are both free and easily accessible to the average qualifying consumer. If the FCC's recommendations are adopted, the program will be immediately handicapped.

We also have great concern about the FCC's recommendation of capping support for the low-income portion of the Lifeline program. To do so would again strike at the heart of what has made Lifeline more successful in the past three years than in the over twenty-year life of the program. Much of the rise in participation in the Lifeline program has been due to the "great recession" which has affected this country in recent years and the high unemployment that has accompanied it.

Again we are extremely supportive of the FCC's efforts to modernize the Lifeline program. There are some very strong proposals that were put forward which we believe will strengthen the program and help to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse. However, on behalf of our constituents, we feel strongly that the recommended usage fees and the elimination of "self-certification" procedures will cripple an important federal program at a time when it is needed the most.

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the issues with these critical programs. We look forward to observing the ongoing rulemaking process.

Sincerely,

Denise Harlow
State Representative

Diane Russell
State Representative

Mark Eves
State Representative

Peter Stuckey
State Representative

CC:

Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker