

November 21, 2011

Greater First Church
4862 Olcott Avenue
East Chicago, Indiana 46312

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 11-42, Lifeline and Link-Up Reform and Modernization; CC Docket No. 96-45, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service; WC Docket No. 03-109, Lifeline and Link-Up

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps, McDowell and Clyburn:

It is with great urgency that we write you today on behalf of the poor and indigent that we serve on a daily basis through the ministries we provide.

There are over 40 million Americans living at or below the national poverty line. The current recession, which has created an alarming rate of unemployment, makes matters even worse for this at-risk population. This crisis is affecting the "least of these". As entitlement programs are being slashed at the federal and state levels, those of us who devote much of our time to meeting the needs of those in poverty need all the assistance we can get.

Recently we became aware of a subsidized cell phone program that helps millions of poor and underserved Americans. It is the FCC's Lifeline and Link-Up America program that allows poor and low-income persons to have access to a cell phone with a limited amount of subsidized minutes each month. It is akin to a lifeline in the dark for all who the program serves.

We are concerned about proposals being considered by the FCC that would make it more difficult for people to access the program and possibly even cap Lifeline and Link-Up funding. Asking applicants to provide additional documentation in the form of food stamp letters or other documents that provide proof of poverty and requiring a monthly fee from program participants would certainly rule out participation for many.

It's a fact that low-income Americans often have unstable housing conditions which affect their ability to maintain consistent sets of records. Records are often lost or destroyed making it difficult for many to provide needed documentation. Then there's the problem of getting this documentation to the phone provider. Copying and fax fees,

limited access to scanners and even the Internet—all this makes providing documentation a problematic undertaking that will certainly keep many from enrolling. A monthly fee will be another barrier to participation in the Lifeline program. Those who qualify for Lifeline are already facing economic hardship. In most cases, they are surviving on a meager monthly income that leaves them little room for extras, including a cell phone. It has been reported that currently, during this period of economic stress, around 40% of American households have no discretionary income. Requiring a monthly fee will absolutely limit participation.

Finally, capping the fund during this period of increased economic hardship seems highly inappropriate when the need is so great.

We believe in this program and have a deep and passionate desire to see it continue in its present form so it can continue to serve the most vulnerable. When poor people have their electricity cut off, heat cut off, can't pay their rent and afford their medicine, this service allows them some means of staying connected to family, friends, and yes, even their church and pastor, in hopes of finding some help in times of trouble. Lifeline and Link-Up provide a light in the midst of darkness so that the poor can have a fighting chance to see their way out.

All that we ask is that you look at this program through the eyes of the thousands it has helped and put yourself in their shoes and ask the question: What would you do when your choices, options, and alternatives are limited by bureaucrats that don't have to live like you live, yet they make decisions that can make your life so hard or so much better?

This program is no panacea to poverty; simply put, it perhaps provides one with the means to find a way out. We, the undersigned religious leaders and those we serve, would greatly appreciate it if you would fight for the people Lifeline and Link-Up serve and save the program in its present form.

Our prayers are with you as you make decisions that will impact the lives of millions of Americans.

Serving Christ,



Bishop Tavis Lane Grant
Greater First Church
East Chicago, Indiana

Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony
President
Detroit NAACP
Detroit, Michigan

Bishop Victor Agee
State Bishop of Illinois
Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship
Chicago, Illinois

Pastor Steven Bland
Detroit Baptist Ministers
Detroit, Michigan

Bishop Franklin Blanks
Community Church of Christ
International
Atlanta, Georgia

Bishop Beulah B. Brandon, Th.D.
New Life Fellowship
St. Louis, Missouri

Reverend William Briscoe
MICAH-Milwaukee Ministers'
Conference
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Rev. David Bullock
State Director
Rainbow Push Michigan
Detroit, Michigan

Bishop Timothy Clark
Presiding Bishop
Berean Fellowship
Columbus, Ohio

Bishop Craig Cobb
Church On The Move
Dallas, Texas

Bishop David Cooper
Regional Bishop
Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Bishop Greg Davis
Greg Davis Ministries/Impact TV
Detroit, Michigan

Bishop James Dixon
Community of Faith
Houston, Texas

Bishop James Dukes
Liberation Christian Center
Chicago, Illinois

Rev. Walter Blaylock
Rainbow Push Coalition
Elgin, Illinois

Bishop Lawrence Brandon
Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship
Shreveport, Louisiana

Pastor Darius Brooks
Grace Central
Bellwood, Illinois

Pastor Willie James Campbell
President of Evangelism
Church of God In Christ
Chicago, Illinois

Bishop Herbert Coats
Redeemed International Church
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Pastor Justin Cohen
Full Gospel Theological College
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dr. Andre Cook, CEO
Kingdom Life Churches
New York, New York

Pastor Gary Crum
Elmwood Community Church
Selma, Alabama

Bishop Gregory Dillard
Pentecostal Church of Christ
Chicago Heights, Illinois

Bishop James Douglas
Suffragan Bishop
United Pentecostal Churches
Cleveland, Ohio

Bishop J. D. Ellis
United Pentecostal Churches
Cleveland, Ohio

Bishop Joseph Farmer
Greg Davis Ministries/Impact TV
Detroit, Michigan

Bishop Derrick Fitzpatrick
Stone Temple Baptist Church
Chicago, Illinois

Bishop George Gibson
Christian Love Fellowship
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dr. Mildred Harris
God First Ministries
Chicago, Illinois

Bishop Andy C. Lewter
Hollywood Full Gospel Church
Long Island, New York

Bishop Terrance Livingston
Dayton Outreach
Dayton, Ohio

Bishop Joseph McCargo
The International Apostolic Network
Landover, Maryland

Pastor Robert McClure
First Church Of God
Gary, Indiana

Pastor DeAndre Patterson
Destiny Worship Center
Chicago, Illinois

Pastor Sieon Roberts
New Hope Church
Gary, Indiana

Bishop Tom Scott
34th Street Church of God
Tampa, Florida

Pastor Quincy Fielding
Church of God
Los Angeles, California

Bishop Andrew Ford
Ford Memorial Temple
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Bishop Simon Gordon
Midwest Regional Bishop
Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship
Chicago, Illinois

Pastor Fred Jackson
True Foundation Full Gospel Baptist
Church
Gary, Indiana

Pastor Gregory Livingston
Mission of Faith Baptist Church
Chicago, Illinois

Bishop Roy Marshall
Nehemiah Community Church
Chicago, Illinois

Bishop Bobby McCarter
Fairview FGBC
Jackson, Mississippi

Reverend Charles McKenzie
State Director
Rainbow Push Florida
Tampa, Florida

Bishop Neal Roberson
Gospel True Life Church
Lansing, Michigan

Bishop Shawn Stevens
Full Gospel Theological College
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Bishop Larry Trotter
Presiding Bishop
New Century Churches International
Chicago, Illinois

Pastor Walter Turner
Chicago Baptist Ministers
Chicago, Illinois

Dr. J.C. Wade
Zion Baptist Church
East Chicago, Indiana

Dr. Cynthia West, CEO
The Apostolic Network
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Pastor Kelly B. Williams
Greater Destiny Church
East Chicago, Indiana

Pastor Lester Williams
Community Church of Christ
International
New Orleans, Louisiana

Pastor Chris Woods
RAW Ministries International
Dallas, Texas

Pastor Theodore Turner
Plaquemines Parish Ministers'
Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana

Bishop Lanier Twyan
Full Gospel Theological College
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Bishop Donald Washington
Mount Hermon Baptist Church/Come
Alive Fellowship
Columbus, Ohio

Pastor Bernice Williams
First Corinthian Pentecostal Church
Chicago, Illinois

Bishop Lester Williams
Presiding Bishop
Community Churches International
Queens, New York

Bishop Orlando Wilson
Antioch Baptist Church
Baltimore, Maryland