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WASHINGTON ? In a speech delivered Monday morning, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski outlined his approach for reforming the Universal Service Fund's "Lifeline" program, which provides financial support to eligible recipients who cannot afford vital communications services such as basic telephone service.

Free Press Policy Director Matt Wood made the following statement:

"We agree that for the long-term sustainability of the program, Lifeline, like all other universal service programs, needs to be administered as efficiently as possible. The FCC shouldn't focus on reducing the number of fully qualified participants in a historically under-utilized program, but on ensuring better accountability for subsidized carriers' use of the funds. We look forward to seeing the chairman's proposals to make companies more accountable and keep costs down while guaranteeing access to communications services to all those who qualify. Making sure that subsidized providers are not earning excessive profits is critical to Lifeline's future.

"Reforming and redirecting Lifeline toward broadband is essential. While preliminary steps in that direction are encouraging, pilot programs and private initiatives will not be enough to solve all of our nation's broadband-adoption problems. Corporate efforts like Connect to Compete may be a net positive, but they promise nothing more than bare minimum download speeds to a very limited set of eligible recipients. The FCC can and should put its own house in order to set Lifeline on solid ground and reshape it as an efficient program focused on this century's technology."