**BEFORE THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

**Washington, D.C. 20554**

| In the Matter of | |
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| Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization | WC Docket No. 11-42 |
| Lifeline and Link Up | WC Docket No. 03-109 |
| Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service | CC Docket No. 96-45 |
| Advancing Broadband Availability Through Digital Literacy Training | WC Docket No. 12-23 |

**COMMENTS OF**

**CALAVERAS TELEPHONE COMPANY**
**CAL-ORE TELEPHONE CO.**
**DUCOR TELEPHONE COMPANY**
**FORESTHILL TELEPHONE CO.**
**HAPPY VALLEY TELEPHONE COMPANY**
**HORNITOS TELEPHONE COMPANY**
**KERMAN TELEPHONE CO.**
**PINNACLES TELEPHONE CO.**
**THE PONDEROSA TELEPHONE CO.**
**SIERRA TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC.**
**THE SISKIYOU TELEPHONE COMPANY**
**VOLCANO TELEPHONE COMPANY**
**WINTERHAVEN TELEPHONE COMPANY**
**(the "California Small ILECs")**

**ON STATE CERTIFICATIONS TO OPT-OUT OF THE NATIONAL LIFELINE ACCOUNTABILITY DATABASE**

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January 9, 2013

Attorneys for the California Small ILECs

Pursuant to sections 1.415 and 1.419 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and in accordance with the timeframe for comments outlined in Public Notice (DA 12-1994),[1] Calaveras Telephone Company, Cal-Ore Telephone Co., Ducor Telephone Company, Foresthill Telephone Co., Happy Valley Telephone Company, Hornitos Telephone Company, Kerman Telephone Co., Pinnacles Telephone Co., The Ponderosa Telephone Co., Sierra Telephone Company, Inc., The Siskiyou Telephone Company, Volcano Telephone Company, and Winterhaven Telephone Company (the "California Small ILECs") hereby offer these Comments on State Certifications to Opt-Out of the National Lifeline Accountability Database, and specifically on the Petition of the California Public Utilities Commission and the People of the State of California to Opt Out of National Lifeline Accountability Database ("California Petition").[2] The California Small ILECs support the California Petition and believe that the California Petition demonstrates that the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") is capable of meeting the objectives underlying the establishment of the national database.

The California Small ILECs appreciate this opportunity to provide input on the California Petition. As explained in the California Petition, the California LifeLine Program meets all of the specific requirements enumerated in the Lifeline Reform Order[3] and the minimum requirements for opt out as clarified in Public Notice (DA 12-1624).[4] In the Lifeline Reform Order, the Commission outlined a plan for a national database to detect and eliminate duplicative Lifeline support and imposed requirements on Eligible Telecommunications Carriers ("ETCs")

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[1] Wireline Competition Bureau Seeks Comment on State Certifications to Opt-Out of National Lifeline Accountability Database, WC Docket No. 11-42, WC Docket No. 03-109, CC Docket No. 12-23; Public Notice; DA 12-1994 (rel. Dec. 10, 2012) (Public Notice (DA-1994)).

[2] Petition of the California Public Utilities Commission and the People of the State of California to Opt-Out of National Lifeline Accountability Database; WC Dkt. Nos. 11-42 et al., CC Dkt. No 96-45 (filed Dec. 3, 2012).

[3] Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization, Lifeline and Link Up, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, Advancing Broadband Availability Through Digital Literacy Training; WC Docket No. 11-42, WC Docket No. 03-109, CC Docket No. 12-23; Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking; FCC 12-11 (rel. Feb. 6, 2012) (Lifeline Reform Order).

[4] Wireline Competition Bureau Clarifies Minimum Requirements for States Seeking to Opt Out of National Lifeline Accountability Database, WC Docket No. 11-42, WC Docket No. 03-109, CC Docket No. 12-23; Public Notice; DA 12-1624 (rel. Oct. 11, 2012) (Public Notice (DA-12-1624)).

or state Lifeline administrators to query the database prior to signing up program applicants to determine if the subscriber or a member of the subscriber's household is already receiving Lifeline support. *Lifeline Reform Order*, at ¶¶ 179-225. The Commission also recognized that states may have their own systems for eliminating duplicative Lifeline support and established a process for these states to opt out of the national database. *Id.*, at ¶ 221.

The Public Notice (DA-1624) explained that to opt out of the national database, a state's petition must demonstrate that a state system meets the following minimum requirements: (1) list the obligations on ETCs to comply with the state's system; (2) demonstrate that the state system in place can facilitate a process to scrub individual and household duplicates from an ETCs' subscriber rolls; (3) demonstrate that the system can prevent ETCs from signing up individuals or households already receiving a Lifeline benefit; (4) demonstrate a means of standardizing and verifying addresses submitted to the system; (5) demonstrate means of verifying a subscriber's identity; (6) include a dispute resolution process; (7) have the ability to receive and process Lifeline subscriber information; (8) capture address and date of service initiation to which Tribal Link Up support is applied; (9) demonstrate that it has a process to manage exceptions to the definition of duplicative support rules; (10) retain all data related to consumers receiving Lifeline and Link Up benefits for 10 years after receiving Link Up or de-enrollment from Lifeline; (11) be capable of receiving updates from ETCs in real-time and in periodic batches; (12) include safeguards to ensure that the data in system is only used for duplicative support; and (13) allow the FCC and USAC to access records for oversight and for audits. *Public Notice (DA 12-1624)*, at pp. 2-3.

The California Petition demonstrates that the California LifeLine Program adequately detects, prevents, and eliminates duplicative support and that California should be granted an opt out. Specifically, the California LifeLine Program utilizes an ongoing process for identifying, resolving, and scrubbing duplicative data within its records that meet each of the requirements identified above. All providers within the State of California are subject to this process, which is facilitated through the use of the following four matching elements: (1) operating carrier number,

(2) a consumer's entire name, (3) a consumer's telephone number, and (4) a consumer's service address. *California Petition*, at pp. 2-3. By conducting real-time duplication checks, the California LifeLine Program is capable of preventing carriers from enrolling individuals or households already receiving Lifeline benefits. The California Petition also sufficiently explains the California LifeLine Program's ability to standardize data, verify subscriber identify, and manage exceptions. *California Petition*, at p. 4-6. In addition, it explains the policies related to dispute resolution and record retention. *California Petition*, at p. 5, 7.

The California Small ILECs believe that the California LifeLine Program includes a satisfactory mechanism for identifying duplicative accounts in accordance with the minimum requirements identified in Public Notice (DA-1624). Moreover, California is working to implement further matching elements based on a customer's date of birth and the last four digits of a customer's social security number. The California Small ILECs understand that the CPUC and California's third-party administrator already include fields for a customer's date of birth and the last four digits of a customer's social security numbers on new applications and re-certification forms, and the third-party administrator will be expected to collect and maintain these records. The addition of these further matching elements will make the California LifeLine Program even more robust in meeting the FCC's opt out standard.

The California Small ILECs appreciate this opportunity to offer comments on the CPUC's Petition and urge the FCC to grant the CPUC's request to opt out from the national database requirements. The California Petition sufficiently demonstrates that the California Lifeline Program effectively meets the minimum requirements to opt out. Additionally, the duplication-scrubbing process implemented by the California LifeLine Program successfully

accomplishes the stated objective of the national database by implementing an effective process that reduces fraud and waste in the Lifeline program.

Dated this 9th day of January, 2013, at San Francisco, California.

Respectfully submitted,

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