



PUBLIC NOTICE

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WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES DEFERRAL OF THE SKILLED NURSING FACILITY PILOT PROGRAM PENDING COMMISSION CONSIDERATION OF RURAL HEALTHCARE BROADBAND PROPOSALS

WC Docket No. 02-60
WC Docket No. 10-90

In this Public Notice, pursuant to direction from the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) in a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking issued in WC Docket No. 10-90, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announces deferral of the Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Pilot Program adopted in the December 2012 rural healthcare program reform order (the *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*), pending the Commission's consideration of healthcare related proposals in WC Docket No. 10-90.¹

In the *Technology Transitions Order*, the Commission solicited a variety of voluntary experiments to gather information to help it ensure that the nation's communications networks continue to provide the services consumers want and need in this era of historic technological transformations. Among other things, the Commission sought comment in the *Technology Transitions FNPRM* on conducting consumer-oriented rural broadband experiments that would improve patient access to healthcare, recognizing the increased and growing demand for telemedicine and remote monitoring.² It sought comment on using either funds from the Connect America Fund or from the rural healthcare mechanism for the rural healthcare broadband experiments, including whether to use some part of the \$50 million set aside by the Commission in the *Healthcare Connect Fund Order* for the SNF Pilot Program.³ In light of the Commission's inquiry about using some portion of SNF Pilot Program funding for these

¹ In the *Healthcare Connect Fund Order*, the Commission stated that it expected to implement the SNF Pilot Program in Funding Year 2014 (which ends on June 30, 2015). See *Rural Health Care Support Mechanism*, WC Docket No. 02-60, Report and Order 27 FCC Rcd 16678, 16815-18, paras. 345-350 (2012) (*Healthcare Connect Fund Order*); see also *Technology Transitions*; *AT&T Petition to Launch a Proceeding Concerning the TDM-to-IP Transition*; *Connect America Fund*; *Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program*; *Telecommunications Relay Services And Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*; *Numbering Policies for Modern Communications*, GN Docket Nos. 13-5, 12-353, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 13-97, CG Docket Nos. 10-51, 03-123, Order, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Report and Order, Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Proposal for Ongoing Data Initiative, FCC 14-5 at para.225 n.351 (rel. Jan. 31, 2014) (*Technology Transitions Order and/or FNPRM*) (directing the Bureau to issue a public notice to inform interested parties of the deferral of the SNF Pilot Program pending consideration of healthcare-related broadband experiments).

² See generally *Technology Transitions FNPRM* at paras. 224-30 (proposing rural healthcare broadband experiments).

³ *Id.* at para. 227.

experiments, it instructed the Bureau to defer implementation of the SNF Pilot Program until the Commission determines whether to use SNF Pilot Program funds for the rural healthcare broadband experiments.⁴

Healthcare providers and other stakeholders interested in filing comments on issues related to the rural healthcare broadband experiments should submit these comments in WC Docket No. 10-90. The *Technology Transitions Order and FNPRM* may be accessed at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-14-5A1.pdf, which also provides the comment cycles and due dates.

For further information, please contact Garnet Hanly, Telecommunications Access Policy Division, Wireline Competition Bureau at (202) 418-0995 or TTY (202) 418-0484.

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⁴ *See id.* at para. 225 n.351.