



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

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BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

July 21, 2011

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45,
Lifeline and Link-Up, WC Docket No. 03-109, Lifeline and Link-Up
Reform Modernization, WC Docket No. 11-18

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Before the FCC acts on any modifications of the Lifeline and Link-up program for the poor who benefit from cell-phone service, I urge you first to fix an underlying problem of inequity.

Florida telephone customers contribute \$270 million on a net basis each year to the Universal Service Fund that fuels Lifeline, but only about \$1 of every \$2 contributed comes back into the state to fund low-income telephone service, connecting schools and libraries and funding for rural areas. That's because most of Florida's Universal Service contributions go to other predominantly rural states. Until the FCC updates or fixes this situation, Floridians are going to continue to get short changed.


I have raised this concern in the past, and I raise it again now, largely because I understand the FCC is considering, among other things, whether to impose a mandatory minimum charge or dramatically different enrollment processes for all cellphone customers subsidized by the Lifeline and Link-Up program.

I support meaningful reforms that advance the long-term sustainability of the program, particularly those aimed at eliminating waste, fraud and abuse in the program. The agency's interim order dated June 21, 2011, is a common-sense solution to make sure that a single subscriber can only receive a single benefit. However, a more permanent solution is needed to manage this issue going-forward.

I urge the Commission to avoid reforms that would create unreasonable barriers for any eligible subscriber to obtain service, or reforms that would disrupt service for eligible program participants.

The FCC needs to manage the Universal Service Fund in a way that limits unsustainable growth and moves towards affordable service for all. But, I am concerned that some of the proposals under review threaten to increase and cement inequities in the overall funding mechanism for Florida and because of this, the true goals of the program will not be met.

Sincerely,


Senator Bill Nelson