

## **FCC CAC Recommendation Regarding**

### **FCC Interagency Coordination To Promote/Facilitate Communications Access**

WHEREAS, broadband, as described in the National Broadband Plan, “is transforming the landscape of America more rapidly and more pervasively than earlier infrastructure networks”<sup>1</sup>; and

WHEREAS, affordability and relevance have been identified as barriers to broadband adoption<sup>2</sup>; and

WHEREAS, in 1934 Congress tasked the Commission to “make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States . . . a rapid, efficient, Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges”<sup>3</sup>; and

WHEREAS, in 1996 Congress set forth universal service principles including that “consumers in all regions of the nation, including low-income consumers, . . . should have access to telecommunications and information services”<sup>4</sup>; and

WHEREAS, in meeting the national universal service goals, the Commission oversees four (4) universal service programs, including the federal Lifeline assistance program and the Schools and Libraries program (E-rate); and

WHEREAS, the federal Lifeline program is currently designed to help low-income consumers afford essential telecommunication service by subsidizing \$9.25 off the monthly cost of voice service; and

WHEREAS, low-income consumers are eligible for federal Lifeline assistance if they participate in Medicaid; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Supplemental Security Income; Federal Public Housing Assistance; Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program; National School Lunch Program’s free and reduced meal program; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the standard Lifeline eligibility criteria, low-income consumers living on tribal lands may also qualify for federal Lifeline assistance through participation in Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance; Tribally-administered TANF; Head start (via the income-qualifying standards) and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; and

---

<sup>1</sup> NBP at 3.

<sup>2</sup> NBP at ch.9.

<sup>3</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 151.

<sup>4</sup> 47 U.S.C. § 254(b).

WHEREAS, the Commission’s recent Lifeline reform order directs the Wireline Competition Bureau and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) which administers the Lifeline program for the Commission, to “take all necessary actions so that . . . there will be an automated means to determine Lifeline eligibility for, at a minimum, the three most common programs through which consumers qualify for Lifeline”<sup>5</sup>; and

WHEREAS, there is an ongoing Lifeline Broadband pilot to begin studying modifications to the Lifeline program for the delivery of broadband service to low-income households<sup>6</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the Commission structured recent Lifeline reforms and processes such as the National Lifeline Duplicates Accountability Database in a manner that is “sufficiently flexible to adapt to reasonably foreseeable changes in the Lifeline rules so that additional functionality can be added at minimal cost” such as checking for duplicative broadband support<sup>7</sup>; and

WHEREAS, federal benefits programs are increasingly relying on websites to provide consumers with information about programs and provide web portals to apply for benefits<sup>8</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the dissemination of Lifeline eligibility to consumers applying for the low-income federal assistance programs listed above, would help to increase participation in Lifeline while helping to the federal benefits operate more efficiently due to the provision of a stable phone number for their clients; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Consumer Advisory Committee recommends that the Commission closely coordinate with federal departments, independent agencies and program administrators that oversee direct low-income consumer assistance programs to align Commission policies and programs which focus on helping low-income consumers and communities with communications access.

Unanimously Adopted July 25, 2014

Respectfully submitted:

Debra R. Berlyn, Chairperson

FCC Consumer Advisory Committee

---

<sup>5</sup> Lifeline Reform Order, FCC 12-11 at para 223.

<sup>6</sup> Lifeline Broadband Pilot Order, FCC DA 12-2045 (Rel. Dec. 19, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Lifeline Reform Order, FCC 12-11 at para 222.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g., the USDA Food and Nutrition Service website list of states that have online applications for SNAP at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.