



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

March 21, 2016

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1707 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Van Hollen:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

I wholeheartedly agree that broadband has evolved to become an essential vehicle for expanding access to information, health services, educational resources, and employment opportunities. And while it is clear that broadband has become essential in today's society, affordability remains a major barrier to adoption by low-income consumers. That is why transforming Lifeline for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is key to the future of this vital program.

Earlier this month, working closely with Commissioner Clyburn, I circulated a proposed Order for my colleagues' consideration that would modernize the Commission's Lifeline program to make broadband more affordable for low-income Americans. At the same time, the proposed Order would put in place a number of key programmatic reforms designed to protect the integrity of the Lifeline program and build on the Commission's recent efforts to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in the program. The Order will be considered at the FCC's March 31 Open Meeting.

The proposed Order takes a number of the steps you recommend to address the broadband affordability gap. For example, for the first time, low income consumers could, as you suggest, apply the \$9.25 per month support to stand-alone broadband service, as well as bundled voice and data service packages. In addition, the Order would free up the Lifeline marketplace to encourage wide participation in the program by broadband providers, giving consumers competitive service options. And the proposed Order would put in place minimum service standards to ensure that eligible subscribers' benefits are directed only to quality services that are worthy of universal service funding.

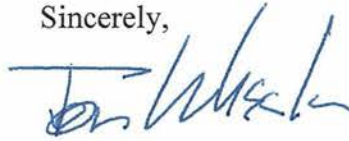
The Order also would take important steps to further ensure program integrity. Specifically, it would refine the list of federal programs that may be used to validate Lifeline eligibility to those that support electronic validation, are most accountable, and best identify people needing support (SNAP, SSI, Medicaid, Veterans Pension and Tribal), along with

income-based eligibility. The Order would also establish a National Eligibility Verifier that would remove telecommunications carriers from the process of making eligibility determinations. I expect that these changes will make Lifeline a truly 21<sup>st</sup> Century program that effectively and responsibly makes broadband service accessible for low-income households.

While the Order on circulation takes many of your recommended steps, I recognize that it may not take all of them. Nonetheless, I am heartened that we agree completely on the critical need to modernize the Lifeline program for a digital era and to do so as soon as possible. The proposed Lifeline Order was designed with two equally important goals in mind—to help connect low-income Americans to the Internet and to ensure the fiscal integrity of the program going forward. We need not choose between the two. We can—and must—have both. And we can—and must—do so now.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

March 21, 2016

The Honorable Marc Veasey  
U.S. House of Representatives  
414 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Veasey:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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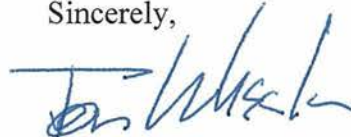
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Tom Wheeler



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THE CHAIRMAN

March 21, 2016

The Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2302 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Velazquez:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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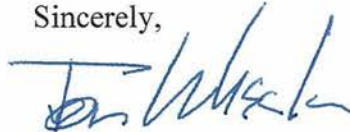
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

March 21, 2016

The Honorable Bonnie Watson Coleman  
U.S. House of Representatives  
126 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Coleman:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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March 21, 2016

The Honorable John Yarmuth  
U.S. House of Representatives  
403 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Yarmuth:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service Lifeline program. I share your desire to ensure that Lifeline continues to assist low income consumers with access to affordable communications services. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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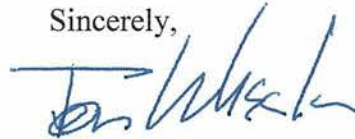
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