



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

June 8, 2018

The Honorable Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senate  
458 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Lifeline program. I am committed to bridging the digital divide, and, like you, I believe the Lifeline program can help do just that. This is especially important for the rural adults and students you write about, who all too often have no Internet access at all, let alone affordable access. That is why the Federal Communications Commission adopted the *2017 Lifeline Reform Order*, which seeks to focus Lifeline support where it is most needed and incentivize investment in networks that enable 21<sup>st</sup>-century connectivity for all Americans. The *Order* increased consumer choice by eliminating restrictions that barred Lifeline consumers from changing Lifeline providers for a year and protected consumers by barring low-quality services that offered mobile broadband in theory but failed to do so in practice.

At the same time, I am deeply committed to ensuring that the Commission fulfills its obligation to be a responsible steward of the Universal Service Fund. It is critical to strengthen the Lifeline program's efficacy and integrity by reducing the waste, fraud, and abuse that has run rampant in this program for the better part of a decade. For example, GAO discovered 1,234,929 Lifeline subscribers who apparently were not eligible to participate in the program as well as 6,378 individuals who apparently enrolled or recertified after being reported as deceased. That limited sample alone constituted more than \$137 million in abuse each year.

To address this, in a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking accompanying the *Order* the Commission sought comment on a wide variety of measures to improve the administration of the Lifeline program—from re-empowering state commissions to police Lifeline carriers to partnering with states to stand up the National Verifier, from improving program audits to adopting a self-enforcing budget. We are currently reviewing the record that has been compiled in response to that Notice to determine the best path forward, and your letter has been added to that record. Please be assured that we will take into consideration the issues and concerns presented by all stakeholders as the Commission concludes its review.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent part.

Ajit V. Pai