

MICHAEL F. BENNET
COLORADO

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

FINANCE

HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

309

WASHINGTON, DC:
458 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5852

COLORADO:
1127 SHERMAN STREET
SUITE 150
DENVER, CO 80203-2398
(303) 455-7600

<http://www.bennet.senate.gov>

April 26, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street Southwest
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I write to urge the Commission to leave intact reforms made in 2016 to the Lifeline program. These reforms are essential to a critical program to help close the digital divide for low-income Americans.

As you know, the Lifeline modernization and reform in 2016 allowed the existing \$9.25 per month subsidy to be used for broadband Internet access in addition to telephone service. These reforms were projected to help 12 million households currently using their subsidy for phone service to pay their monthly broadband bill, with a goal to get 20 million additional Americans subscribed to high-speed Internet by 2020.

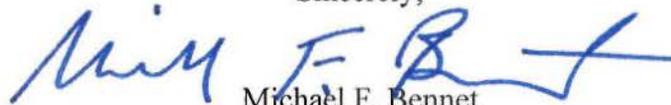
Proposed changes to this program that restrict access to the subsidies or increase bureaucratic hurdles will deny the opportunities provided by the Internet to millions of Americans. These changes would put low-income families, workers, and children, particularly those who live in rural areas, at a significant disadvantage relative to their higher-income peers.

According to recent analysis conducted by Pew Research, just 63 percent of rural adults have a home broadband connection, barely half of American adults with household incomes under \$30,000 have a home broadband connection, and around 5 million school-age children do not have a broadband Internet connection at home.

The digital divide not only perpetuates economic inequality but also a cruel "homework gap," where a lack of reliable broadband at home makes it difficult for students to complete online homework assignments and keep pace with their peers who have Internet access at home. This is especially problematic given that as many as 70 percent of K-12 teachers in the United States assign homework that requires Internet access to complete.

High-speed, reliable, affordable broadband is essential for families to participate in a 21st Century economy and for all of our communities to thrive. I encourage you to reconsider any attempts to limit the Lifeline program's scope or effectiveness. I look forward to continuing to work together to connect and lift up our communities through high-speed, affordable, and reliable broadband access. Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator