

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

197

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

In an effort to expand broadband adoption, we are writing to request information about the current state of enrollment in the Lifeline Program and the Lifeline National Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier).

As you know, the Lifeline Program helps low-income individuals, working parents, veterans, tribal citizens, and so many other Americans maintain a broadband connection during hard times. Studies show that the most common barrier to broadband adoption among Americans who involuntarily lack internet access is the cost of service.¹ This is a major cause of the digital divide. The stark reality is that Americans living in households that earn less than \$30,000 per year are more than nine times as likely to lack internet at home than better-resourced Americans.²

The Lifeline Program seeks to remedy these disparities and close the digital divide. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Congress have worked hard to make the program as efficient as possible. Part of that effort involves the creation of the National Verifier to provide automated determinations about whether individuals are eligible for Lifeline.

Over the course of the past year, it has become increasingly clear that the state-by-state rollout of the National Verifier requires additional oversight. Specifically, it has come to our attention that deficiencies in the data systems used in the verification process in select states may be cutting out potentially eligible applicants from receiving service or increasing the burden on an applicant as opposed to streamlining data sources, as intended.³ If accurate, these deficiencies threaten the integrity of the program the National Verifier was created to preserve.

¹ Monica Anderson, Andrew Perrin, and Jingjing Jiang, "11% of Americans Don't Use the Internet. Who Are They?" (Pew Research Center, March 5, 2018), <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/05/some-americans-dont-use-the-internet-who-are-they/>.

² *Id.*

³ *See, e.g.*, "Emergency Petition of TracFone Wireless, Inc. for an Order Directing USAC to Alter the Implementation of the National Verifier to Optimize the Automated and Manual Eligibility Verification Processes," WC Docket Nos. 17-287, 11-42, 09-197 (Aug. 9, 2018); Martha Guzman Aceves, "Ex Parte - In the Matter of... Lifeline and Link-Up Reform and Modernization," (February 19, 2019).

Given these concerns, we request that the FCC, working with the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC) and all other entities or contractors charged by the FCC or USAC to administer the Lifeline Program (Lifeline Administrators), respond to the inquiries below. We would appreciate complete responses to the following inquiries no later than April 18, 2019.

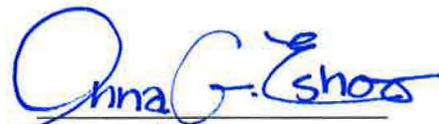
1. Please provide a list of all state databases, with associated states, that the FCC or Lifeline Administrators were unable to access or unable to integrate into the automated verification system. For state databases where Administrators were unable to integrate into the automated verification system, please provide the dates when the FCC believes those databases will be integrated.
2. For each state where the National Verifier was launched (including hard launches and soft launches) how many total households applied for Lifeline since the rollout of the National Verifier?
 - How many of the total, and what percentage of households that applied, were not automatically enrolled through the National Verifier?
 - How many of the households that were not enrolled automatically through the National Verifier were subsequently enrolled in the Lifeline Program?
 - How many of the households that were not enrolled automatically were potentially eligible under a criteria not included in the state's roll out of the National Verifier?
3. Of those households that were unable to automatically enroll in the Lifeline Program through the National Verifier process and subsequently enrolled through an alternative process, what was the average delay from first application to the National Verifier until approval?
4. For each state in which the National Verifier was launched (including hard launches and soft launches) how many, and what percentage of existing Lifeline subscribers, were required to resubmit documentation as proof of eligibility? How many were required to resubmit a new application form altogether?

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



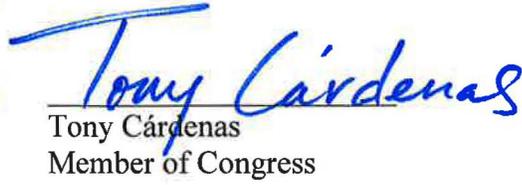
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



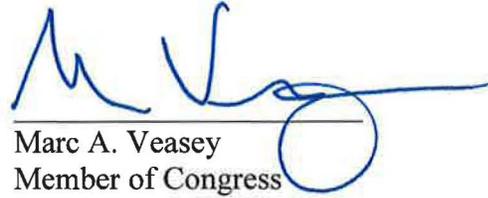
Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Michael O'Rielly, Commissioner
The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner
The Honorable Geoffrey Starks, Commissioner