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For Immediate Release**FCC ACTS TO KEEP COMMUNITIES CONNECTED
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC*****Agency Provides Flexibility to Companies Receiving Certain Legacy Federal Support***

WASHINGTON, March 30, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today took action to give certain carriers flexibility to focus Universal Service Funds on hard-hit areas in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, today’s waiver order allows competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) to use their high-cost legacy support in the service areas of any affiliated ETC in order to respond to the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19.

“We must provide companies with flexibility to meet the fast-changing needs in their communities during this crisis,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “With this waiver, we give these carriers the ability to adjust their deployments as appropriate to the specific needs of the communities they serve. I hope and expect this waiver will allow these carriers to focus their efforts in the areas most in need.”

The Commission’s rules require all legacy high-cost support to be used in a particular service area. Today’s order finds that it is in the public interest to waive this requirement for a limited period of time to allow competitive ETCs receiving legacy high-cost support to maximize their ability to make real-time, efficient decisions about the use of their support, and direct that funding to the areas where it is most needed. Providing this much needed flexibility will help ensure that these ETCs can maintain their networks in the areas hardest hit by the impacts of COVID-19.

The Bureau’s order waives the requirement that all legacy high-cost support must be used in a given area until June 30, 2020, at which time the Commission will evaluate whether an extension is warranted. The waiver order does not affect any of the other obligations of high-cost recipients.

For updates on the FCC’s wide array of actions to keep consumers connected during the coronavirus pandemic, visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/coronavirus>. For more information on Chairman Pai’s Keep Americans Connected Pledge, visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/keepamericansconnected>.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).