

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2020

Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to necessitate immediate action from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure Americans experiencing economic hardship can maintain broadband and voice services. The FCC's recent waiver to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program may help increase internet connectivity in underserved communities. However, more must be done to ensure Americans, irrespective of their location, receive the support they need to stay online. We write today to urge you to implement these waivers for all Lifeline applicants.

Staggering unemployment and financial strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is occurring across the country. While rural Tribal areas continue to experience a disproportionate and unacceptable lack of broadband access, as the FCC acknowledges, the approach taken by the waiver could also provide needed connectivity in other areas suffering from the effects of COVID-19. Urban consumers also face significant challenges during this public health crisis. Many cities and counties have instituted stay at home orders or implemented social distancing measures to limit the spread of the virus. These measures are needed to maintain public health but may prevent consumers from filing necessary application materials when attempting to enroll in the Lifeline program.

While the waiver recognizes the formidable barriers to connectivity on rural Tribal lands, the underlying approach of creating flexibility for carriers to connect consumers before necessary paperwork has been processed could be applied across the Lifeline program to support all struggling Americans. Expanding these waivers to the entirety of the Lifeline program could boost connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic without diluting their efficacy on rural Tribal lands.

The temporary waiver to allow Lifeline carriers to begin offering service to consumers while they finish the application process will provide new options for Americans seeking support. While the waiver does not compel carriers to participate in the new process, limiting the benefits of the waiver to consumers on rural Tribal lands only, using a restriction that has been previously

vacated by the D.C. District Court of Appeals, would prevent carriers in other parts of the country willing to step up from offering expedited service to struggling consumers.

We appreciate your attention to this important issue and urge you to immediately expand the Lifeline program waiver issued on June 1, 2020 across the Lifeline program.

Sincerely,



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
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Mike Quigley
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Henry Cuellar
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Bill Foster
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Scott Peters
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