



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Sanford D. Bishop
U.S. House of Representatives
2407 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Bishop:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

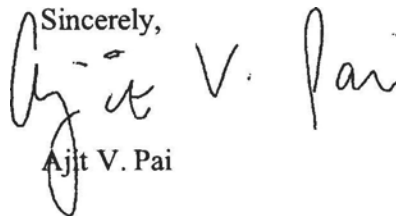
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Henry Cuellar
U.S. House of Representatives
2209 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Cuellar:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

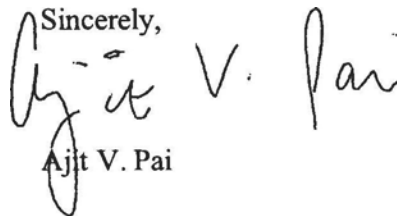
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
U.S. House of Representatives
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Eshoo:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

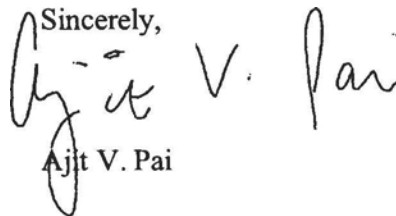
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Bill Foster
U.S. House of Representatives
1224 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Foster:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

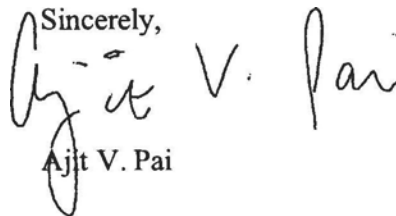
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Sylvia R. Garcia
U.S. House of Representatives
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Garcia:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

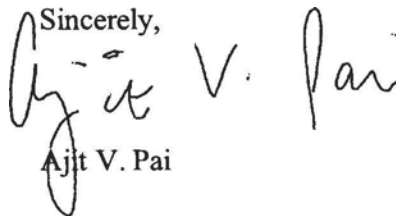
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Ro Khanna
U.S. House of Representatives
221 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Khanna:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

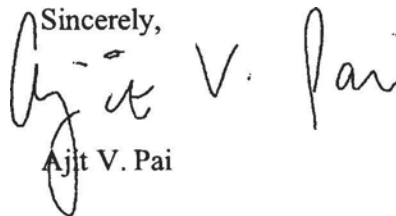
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Doris Matsui
U.S. House of Representatives
2311 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Matsui:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

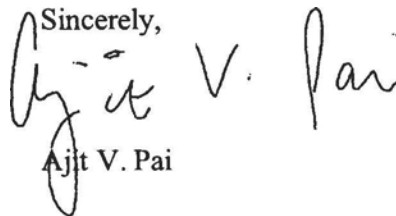
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Jerry McNerney
U.S. House of Representatives
2265 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman McNerney:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

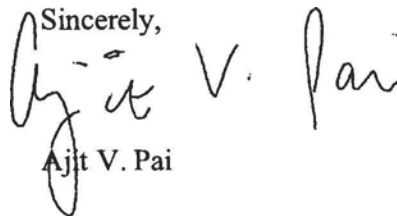
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Gwen Moore
U.S. House of Representatives
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Moore:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

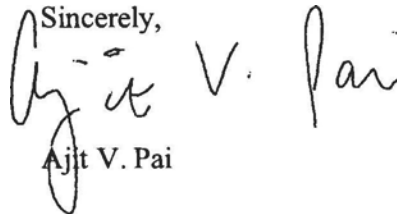
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Joseph Morelle
U.S. House of Representatives
1317 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Morelle:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

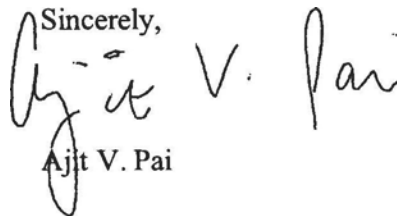
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
U.S. House of Representatives
2136 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Norton:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

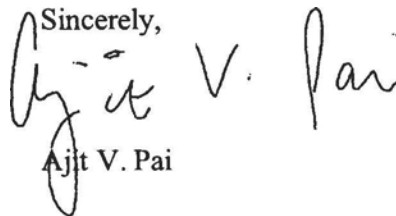
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Scott Peters
U.S. House of Representatives
2338 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Peters:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

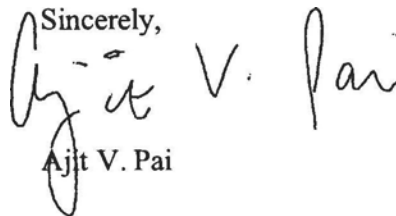
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrollment, we must ensure that

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Mike Quigley
U.S. House of Representatives
2458 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Quigley:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

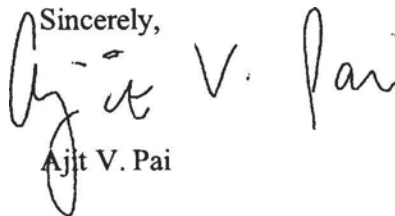
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

August 18, 2020

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
U.S. House of Representatives
2083 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Roybal-Allard:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to ease the burden for rural Tribal residents seeking support through the Lifeline program. As you know, the Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Now more than ever, it is critical that American consumers maintain connectivity so that they can stay in touch with loved ones, telework, participate in telehealth and remote learning, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

That's why, under my leadership, the FCC has taken aggressive action to help ensure that consumers stay connected during this crisis. Most recently, in June the Commission allowed Lifeline applicants residing in rural areas on Tribal lands to begin receiving Lifeline service even if their application failed an automated check and the applicant is still in the process of providing documentation to confirm their eligibility. Residents in rural areas on Tribal lands often have difficulties submitting documentation, given the issues with postal delivery on Tribal lands, lack of electricity, absence of road infrastructure, and remoteness of their location. These difficulties have been exacerbated due to social distancing efforts and closures of storefronts brought by the spread of COVID-19. Given these unique challenges in submitting documentation for residents in rural areas on Tribal lands, the FCC's reforms will enable service providers to begin quickly providing Lifeline service to these consumers while they complete their applications.

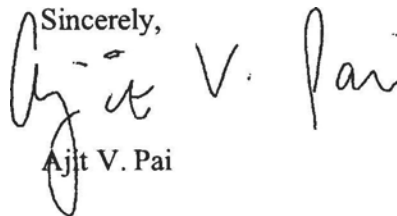
When granting a waiver, the Commission must balance the exigencies of a situation against our responsibility to protect program integrity as the steward of the Universal Service Fund. Further, when waiving a critical program integrity rule, like the requirement that subscribers must be confirmed to be eligible before enrolling in the program, we must tailor that waiver narrowly to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. The June waiver for consumers in rural areas on Tribal lands was implemented based on the unique difficulties in submitting documentation for residents those remote areas. We have not seen the same conditions and challenges for consumers in other areas that would necessitate the same waiver, so we have not extended this waiver into non-Tribal and urban areas. Commission staff will continue to monitor the situation and determine whether any additional waivers are needed.

The Commission has, however, issued other waivers that encompassed all Lifeline subscribers or applicants, regardless of their location. In addition to the relief granted to residents of rural Tribal lands, the Commission in March waived several Commission rules that could have otherwise resulted in the involuntary removal of subscribers from the Lifeline program during the pandemic. These de-enrollment rules are in place to ensure that Lifeline program dollars are directed toward qualifying low-income consumers. The Bureau found that it was in the public interest to waive these requirements for a limited period of time to ensure that no current Lifeline subscriber involuntarily loses service during this unprecedented, nationwide public health emergency. On April 29, the Commission also waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. This relief will make it easier for low-income Americans who recently lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic to enroll in the program. In light of the ongoing pandemic, Commission staff have extended these waivers until November 30, 2020.

In addition to the above waivers, the FCC and the Universal Service Administrative Company, which administers the Lifeline program, have also undertaken numerous efforts to promote Lifeline awareness during the pandemic to ensure that consumers who are newly eligible for the program due to loss of employment or income have the information and resources they need to apply. These coordinated outreach initiatives have involved not only federal and state agencies that administer programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid, through which consumers can qualify for Lifeline, but also a variety of other government agencies and non-profit organizations serving low-income communities. We expect that our Lifeline outreach and coordination with federal, state, and local partners will continue in the coming months to ensure low-income families get and stay connected to broadband and phone service during this critical time.

In sum, during this crisis, we are working to keep existing Lifeline subscribers connected, ease burdens on consumers seeking to enroll in the program, and raise awareness of the program among those populations who need it, including low-income consumers on Tribal lands.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai