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For Immediate Release

**FCC SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON NEW \$3.2 BILLION EMERGENCY
BROADBAND BENEFIT PROGRAM**

***Initiative to Connect Low-Income Households Funded Through Recent
Congressional Appropriation Responds to FCC’s Call to Keep Americans Connected***

WASHINGTON, January 4, 2021—The Federal Communications Commission’s Wireline Competition Bureau today issued a request for comment on how best to administer a new \$3.2 billion Emergency Broadband Benefit Program created by Congress to help low-income consumers access the Internet. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 directed the Commission to create the program, which would reimburse participating companies for providing discounted broadband service and connected devices to eligible households during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’re excited to get to work on this new program, which responds to my call last June for Congress to fund a program to advance the Keep Americans Connected initiative that we launched when the pandemic started,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program will go a long way to ensuring that low-income American families and veterans are connected during the pandemic, and that students can engage in remote learning with support from the program’s funding for connected devices. Our staff is moving quickly to stand up this program so we can quickly direct funding to consumers who need the help, while also guarding against waste, fraud, and abuse. We look forward to getting public input on how best to structure this effort.”

The Consolidated Appropriations Act sets forth several requirements for the program: To participate in the program, a provider must elect to participate and either be designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier or be approved by the Commission. Participating providers will make available to eligible households a monthly discount off the standard rate for an Internet service offering and associated equipment, up to \$50 per month. On Tribal lands, the monthly discount may be up to \$75 per month.

Participating providers will receive reimbursement from the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program for the discounts provided. Participating providers that also supply an eligible household with a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet (connected device) for use during the emergency period may receive a single reimbursement of up to \$100 for the connected device, if the charge to the eligible household for that device is more than \$10 but less than \$50. An eligible household may receive only one supported device. Providers must submit certain certifications to the Commission to receive reimbursement from the program, and the Commission is required to adopt audit requirements to ensure provider compliance and prevent

waste, fraud, and abuse. In structuring the program, the Commission seeks input on a range of issues including:

- Which providers can participate in the program and what do such providers need to do to elect to participate?
- How should the Commission set up an expedited process for approving broadband providers for areas where they are not eligible telecommunications carriers?
- How should the Commission and providers track participating households and verify that they are eligible?
- What services and connected devices are eligible for reimbursement from the program?
- How should the Commission structure the reimbursement process?
- What rules are needed to ensure appropriate service on Tribal lands?
- How should the Commission and participating providers promote awareness of the program?
- What requirements are needed for robust auditing and enforcement of federal rules?
- What reporting requirements are needed both during the program and at its conclusion?

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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).