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For Immediate Release

**FCC SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON ADMINISTERING ROUND 2 OF
COVID-19 TELEHEALTH PROGRAM**

***Additional \$249.95 Million in Round 2 Funding Support for Health Care Providers
Will Build on Success of Initial Program***

WASHINGTON, January 6, 2021—The Federal Communications Commission’s Wireline Competition Bureau today issued a request for comment on how to administer Round 2 of the agency’s COVID-19 Telehealth Program, which received an additional \$249.95 million in support as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. The Commission seeks public input on the metrics the Commission should use to evaluate applications for this round of funding, how the Commission should treat applications that were filed during the initial funding round provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), and additional program improvements.

Established on April 2, 2020, the Commission’s COVID-19 Telehealth Program was designed to help health care providers offer telehealth and connected care services to patients at their homes or mobile locations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the initial funding round, the Commission has committed \$200 million to 539 funding applications from 47 states plus Washington, D.C. and Guam.

“Telehealth has been a critical factor in helping us address the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to have a devastating impact on the health of the American people,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “Last year, the FCC quickly stood up its COVID-19 Telehealth Program, allocating the full \$200 million provided in the CARES Act to worthy telehealth projects across the country. We have already seen the program’s positive impact on expanding access to telehealth services across the country, from health clinics providing bi-lingual telehealth services to rural hospitals connecting with record numbers of remote patients. I’m pleased that this new support from Congress will enable us to extend this program into 2021. I am confident that our team at the Commission will work expeditiously to provide additional support for telehealth services through Round 2 of the program.”

During the initial round of funding, the COVID-19 Telehealth Program provided support to eligible health care providers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by committing to fully fund the telecommunications services, information services, and connected devices necessary to provide critical telehealth and connected care services. The FCC evaluated applications and awarded funding commitments on a rolling basis, prioritizing funding applications that targeted areas that had been hardest hit by COVID-19 and where the support would have the most impact on addressing the community’s health care needs, until the \$200 million in funding was exhausted, which occurred in July 2020.

On December 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act,

providing an additional \$249.95 million to the Commission to support the program. This additional funding will allow the Commission to continue its efforts to expand connected care throughout the country and enable patients to access necessary health care services in a safe manner.

In this public notice, the Commission seeks input on application evaluation metrics, how to address applications filed during the initial round that did not receive funding, and additional program improvements. This includes such questions as: Should we target funding to hardest hit areas and how should the “hardest hit” areas be defined? Given the changing landscape of the pandemic in recent months, how should previous, unfunded applications be addressed? And are there lessons learned from the initial round of the program that could lead to program improvements?

The Public Notice will be published in the Federal Register and comments are due January 19, 2021. Comments can be filed in WC Docket No.20-89 through the Commission’s electronic filing system, available at <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs>. Additional information about this program as administered during the first round of funding, is available online at: <https://www.fcc.gov/covid-19-telehealth-program>.

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