

## COVID-19 Telehealth Program Update

February 17, 2021

### Introductory Remarks – Kris Monteith, Chief, WCB

Good morning again, Madame Chairwoman and Commissioners. Next the Wireline Competition Bureau will give an update on the status of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act provided a second round of funding for the Commission program that helps health care providers purchase broadband service and telehealth equipment to help safely treat patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Stephanie Minnock, an Assistant Division Chief in the Wireline Competition Bureau's Telecommunications Access Policy Division, will give the presentation.

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### Overview – Stephanie Minnock, Assistant Division Chief, WCB, TAPD

- Thank you for the introduction, Kris. Good morning, Madame Chairwoman and Commissioners.
- I'm pleased to provide you with this update on the COVID-19 Telehealth Program, which uses Congressionally appropriated funding to help health care providers provide connected care services to patients at their homes or mobile locations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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### Background

- Last March, as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, Congress appropriated \$200 million to the FCC to support the efforts of health care providers to address the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The CARES Act specified that this funding was to be used for “providing telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to enable the provision of telehealth services . . . .”
- The CARES Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020; the FCC established the COVID-19 Telehealth Program on April 2, 2020.

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### Round 1 Background

- The application filing window opened on April 13, 2020; by July 8, 2020, WCB approved 539 applications and awarded the full \$200 million in funding commitments.
- After receiving these funding commitments, funding awardees purchased connected devices and/or ordered eligible services before submitting their requests for reimbursement to the Commission. Funding awardees had until December 31, 2020 to purchase the connected devices or begin to implement eligible services.
- After purchasing eligible services and/or connected devices, funding awardees submit requests for reimbursement and associated invoice documentation, which is reviewed by FCC staff before CARES Act funding is disbursed from the U.S. Department of the Treasury.
- CARES Act funding awardees have until July 31, 2021 to file their requests for reimbursement; and should submit post-program feedback reports by January 31, 2022.

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### Round 1 Progress

- As of February 16, 2021, over 84% of CARES Act funding awardees have filed invoice submissions, and over 70% of CARES Act funding has been disbursed.

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### **Round 2 Background**

- Last December, as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Congress appropriated an additional \$249.95 million to the FCC's COVID-19 Telehealth Program.
- Among other things, the Act directed the FCC, within 10 days of the Act's enactment, to issue a public notice seeking comment on (1) the metrics used to evaluate applications for this second tranche of funding and (2) how to treat applications filed, but unfunded, from the initial round of funding.

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### **Round 2 Progress**

- As required by the Act, the Bureau released a Public Notice on January 6, 2021 that set a comment filing deadline of January 19, 2021.
  - Over 80 comments were filed by a variety of stakeholders (e.g., health care providers, telehealth product vendors, and trade associations).
- On February 2, 2021, the FCC adopted a Report and Order finding that it is in the public interest to use USAC to administer the COVID-19 Telehealth Program.
- Commission staff will be teeing up for the Commission's consideration a Report and Order that, if adopted, would establish application evaluation criteria for Round 2 funding and provide additional information about the Round 2 application review process.