

Media Contact:

Anne Veigle
anne.veigle@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

FCC ACTS TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN STORM-HARDENED NETWORKS IN PUERTO RICO AND THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Proposes Extending Universal Service Support for Mobile and Fixed Providers Beyond 2023

WASHINGTON, October 27, 2022—The Federal Communications Commission today proposed a plan to extend certain Universal Service Fund support to eligible mobile and fixed carriers in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to ensure consumers have access to advanced telecommunications services in the face of hurricanes and other natural disasters. With the effects of Hurricane Fiona clearly evident, the proposal seeks to build on the Commission’s *Bringing Puerto Rico Together Fund* and the *Connect USVI Fund* and continue support for restoration, hardening, and expansion of resilient communications networks on the islands.

Without Commission action, some of the existing support is scheduled to end starting in June 2023. The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comment on a plan providing transitional support for strengthening and hardening the networks on the islands to withstand storm damage and have redundant capabilities.

The Further Notice seeks comment on providing transitional support for current mobile support recipients for up to 24 months following the end of Stage 2 support in June 2023, or until a long-term mobile funding mechanism is created. The proposal also seeks comment on related conditions for transitional support, including, for example, whether there should be any geographic limitations on where transitional support may be used within a carrier’s service area, and if the support should be limited to expanding 5G networks. Further, the item proposes minimum service and reporting requirements.

For fixed broadband network providers, the item proposes to extend phase-down support that is scheduled to end in June 2023 for providers who were not awarded long-term competitive support in a given area. Recognizing our mandate to ensure access to communication services in the face of natural disasters, the proposal seeks comment on extending that funding until December 31, 2025.

Action by the Commission October 27, 2022 by Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 22-79). Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington approving. Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Commissioner Starks issuing separate statements.

WC Docket Nos. 18-143, 10-90

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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).