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For Immediate Release**FCC APPROVES RULES TO SAFEGUARD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS BY IMPROVING ACCESS TO SAFE AND AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY*****Action Takes Significant Steps to Enhance Privacy for Survivors and Facilitate Communications Access***

WASHINGTON, November 15, 2023—The Federal Communications Commission today took action to help domestic violence survivors access safe and affordable communications. These rules, which build on an inquiry the Commission initiated in 2022, follow the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking adopted earlier this year and will implement key provisions in the Safe Connections Act of 2022 to support survivors of domestic abuse and other related crimes seeking to maintain critical connections with friends, family, and support networks.

As survivors navigate difficult circumstances, access to communications services is critically important, especially since many survivors may not have direct control over their mobile phone plans, which may still be managed by their abusers. Survivors whose devices and associated telephone numbers are part of multi-line or shared plans can face difficulties separating lines from plans where their abuser is also involved, and may struggle to maintain affordable service as they try to move on with their lives. Despite a need for financial support through federal assistance programs, survivors may be hesitant to pursue a line separation for fear of retaliation. Having access to an independent phone connection is important for survivors to be able to communicate and access other available services without fear of their communications, location, or other private information being revealed to their abusers.

Today's action will help survivors by requiring mobile providers to separate phone lines linked to family plans where the abuser is on the account; protect the privacy of survivors by requiring providers to omit records of calls and text messages to domestic violence hotlines from consumer-facing call and text message logs; and provide support for survivors who suffer from financial hardship through the FCC's Lifeline program.

The Commission expects carriers to comply with line separations and emergency support requirements by the third quarter of 2024 and anticipates that carriers will have the necessary tools in place to omit records of calls or text messages to hotlines by late 2024 for most providers.

Action by the Commission November 15, 2023 by Report and Order (FCC 23-96).
Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, Simington, and Gomez approving.
Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Starks and Gomez issuing separate statements.

WC Docket Nos. 22-238, 11-42, 21-450

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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).