



OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN BRENDAN CARR

Chairman Carr Acts to Save the American Public Millions of Dollars by Rejecting Efforts to Extend a COVID-Era Waiver

Petitioners Sought Additional Reimbursements for Unused Services

WASHINGTON, June 27, 2025—FCC Chairman Brendan Carr today circulated an order that would save the American public millions of dollars by rejecting a request to expand a COVID-era waiver. Specifically, the circulated order denies a request by Lifeline providers to extend the FCC’s waiver of the program’s non-usage rules. In their requests, petitioners wanted the FCC to interpret the COVID-era waiver as extending one additional day because doing so would allow them to receive federal subsidies for an entire additional month, notwithstanding the continued non-usage of the service.

FCC Chairman Brendan Carr issued the following statement:

“The American public pays for the federal subsidies that support the agency’s Lifeline program. Therefore, the FCC has a responsibility to be good stewards of those funds. One way we police waste, fraud, and abuse is through enforcement of the FCC’s non-usage rule. This rule prohibits Lifeline providers from obtaining federal subsidies for services that subscribers are not using. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FCC provided a limited waiver of the non-usage rule. But the petitioners here have tried to extend that waiver—and thus obtain millions of dollars in federal subsidies—after the relevant time period ended.

“While the Commission offered flexibility during the pendency of the COVID-19 pandemic, that does not mean we should allow providers to game the system for extra reimbursement, at the American public’s expense, after the need for this leniency had clearly – and officially – ended. I thank the FCC staff for their diligence throughout this process to ensure no money is wasted.”

Additional Background:

Assist Wireless, Boomerang Wireless, Easy Wireless and i-wireless formally challenged a decision by the FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau rejecting the petitioners’ interpretation of the end date of the COVID-19 relief waiver period for non-usage, which would allow them to make upward revisions of reimbursements. Today’s proposal would, if adopted by a vote of the full Commission, affirm the Bureau’s decision that the COVID-19 relief waiver period for non-usage ended on April 30, 2021, and that the petitioners are not entitled to an extra month of support for unused services.

The Lifeline program provides support for communications services to qualifying low-income customers. Participating companies may claim Lifeline support for voice and broadband services only if the subscriber has recently used the service. On March 30, 2020, the Commission temporarily waived this requirement to ensure that no Lifeline subscribers involuntarily lost connectivity during the pandemic. The Commission ended the waiver on

April 30, 2021. The petitioners, however, sought Lifeline reimbursement for unused services through May 1, 2021.

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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).*