

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *In the Matter of Lifeline and Link-Up Reform and Modernization*, WC Docket No. 11-42;  
*Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45; *Lifeline and Link-Up*,  
WC Docket No. 03-109

The FCC and the carriers that participate in the Lifeline Assistance program have an obligation to act in the best interests of low-income consumers, as well as in the proper governance of the program and the Universal Service Fund. As such, I am supporting today's interim measure because it will ensure that qualifying consumers have access to telephone service, while addressing key issues when it comes to program inefficiency. By clarifying that our rules permit no more than one service per person, the Lifeline program will become more cost effective, and the savings realized can be used to benefit additional low-income consumers.

It is crucial that consumers understand our Lifeline rules, and the carriers participating in the Lifeline program are at the front lines of explaining the benefits to avoid individual duplicates. This item clarifies the expectations we have for those carriers when they are signing up a new Lifeline customer. In addition, this Commission is taking a close look at our own consumer information on the program, and we are modifying it as needed to ensure that consumers understand the benefits the Lifeline program affords.

It also is critical that those consumers who currently have more than one Lifeline-supported phone service are well informed of the situation, and that they have an opportunity to decide which phone service they prefer. The Bureau has been working closely with USAC and industry on the notification process; however, all parties involved must do their part to communicate clearly with consumers. This should include what the program rules are and what the resolution process for current duplicates entails. I would like to thank the staff for all of their efforts on this item, to ensure that consumers are properly notified of the duplicate issue and have the opportunity to select their Lifeline provider. It will be very important that we closely follow the duplicate resolution process during the first phase and modify it before the second and third phases, if there is significant consumer confusion.

There is no doubt that the Lifeline program is ripe for reform and modernization. It is important that we not take too long to address the issues teed up in our outstanding Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. That record is now complete, and we should act promptly so we can avoid having to take additional stop gap measures to fix the current program rules. Moreover, like the high-cost program, Lifeline needs to be modernized to reflect the current service needs of low-income consumers. We know that one-third of Americans have not adopted broadband, and affordability is the most significant reason why consumers have not subscribed. For low-income consumers, the cost of service and equipment is especially acute, as adoption for this segment of the population lags significantly. While private sector broadband adoption programs are promising, this Commission has a role to play in ensuring that low-income consumers can be connected. I believe the proposals for reforming the Lifeline program to support broadband service should be fully considered sooner rather than later, so that we may best meet the broadband needs of all American consumers.