



June 1, 2020

NARUC Commissioners
United States of America

Subject: Helping Low-Income Consumers Stay Connected During the COVID-19 Pandemic Through the Federal Lifeline Program

Dear NARUC Members:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on our society and economy. During this crisis, it is critical that Americans have the connectivity they need to stay in touch with loved ones, telework, search for jobs, participate in remote learning and telehealth, and maintain the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) are therefore partnering to raise awareness of the federal Lifeline program, which helps eligible low-income consumers access affordable broadband and phone services.

As you know, Lifeline is an FCC Universal Service Fund program that provides qualifying low-income consumers with monthly discounts on Internet or phone service (up to \$9.25 or up to \$34.25 for those residing on Tribal lands). Consumers qualify for Lifeline if: (1) they participate in certain federal benefits programs (such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Federal Public Housing, or the Veterans Pension and Survivor's Benefit); or (2) their household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. The Lifeline discount is limited to one benefit per household.

Particularly during this national emergency, many Americans may be newly unemployed or face other circumstances that make them eligible for Lifeline for the first time. Yet, they may also be unaware either of their eligibility or how to apply for the program. That's why we're asking for your help in raising awareness of Lifeline benefits by distributing program information to consumers in your state. Specifically, at LifelineSupport.org, you'll find downloadable materials about the Lifeline program on the "[Community Outreach](#)" page, including "How to Apply" Fact Sheets in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) as well as for [Tribal](#) consumers. We hope that your state commission can circulate this information as widely as possible to consumers and other Lifeline stakeholders, including to your state agency partners that administer Medicaid, SNAP, and unemployment benefits. We would also like to call your attention to recent relief the FCC has granted to Americans who recently lost their jobs—specifically, the FCC has temporarily eased the documentation requirements for those who seek to qualify for the Lifeline program based on their income. For further information about this relief, state government agencies can go to the "[Announcements](#)" page at usac.org/lifeline/.

The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), which administers the Lifeline program, also regularly hosts training webinars for social service agencies, consumer advocacy groups, and other organizations that wish to help consumers learn more about applying for Lifeline. NARUC members and other interested parties can register by going to usac.org/lifeline/contact-us/ and clicking on “[Upcoming Dates](#).”

Additionally, the FCC is pleased to announce that it recently expanded access to the Lifeline National Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier), a centralized system that determines consumers’ eligibility for Lifeline, to enable state agencies to take a more hands-on role in helping consumers apply for and enroll in the program. This expanded access was developed based on feedback from NARUC members and will allow state agencies to assist consumers in signing up for Lifeline through the National Verifier, much like Lifeline service providers do today. We hope that state public utility commissions, state departments of health and human services, and state social service agencies will take advantage of this new feature. For more information on how to access it, please visit usac.org/lifeline/ and click on “[COVID-19 Response](#).”

We trust that these resources will be useful to NARUC members and other Lifeline stakeholders in helping eligible consumers learn about and sign up for Lifeline service during this critical time. If you have questions about any of the information above, please send an email to LifelineProgram@usac.org.

Thank you for your continued collaboration and efforts to support the federal Lifeline program and close the digital divide for low-income consumers.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission

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Brandon Presley
President
National Association of Regulatory Utility
Commissioners