



**NARUC**  
National Association of Regulatory  
Utility Commissioners

**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Regina L. Davis, [rdavis@naruc.org](mailto:rdavis@naruc.org)

## **NARUC and FCC Partner to Increase Awareness of Federal Lifeline Broadband and Phone Program**

*Effort is a Response to Newly Eligible Consumers Caused by the Pandemic*

**WASHINGTON** (June 2, 2020) — In response to the COVID-19 pandemic's financial effect on consumers, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and the Federal Communications Commission have joined efforts to increase awareness of eligibility and access to the federal Lifeline Program, which helps eligible low-income consumers access affordable broadband and phone services.

In a joint letter to state public service commissioners, NARUC and the FCC outlined the enhanced outreach efforts for Lifeline, the 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 may qualify for Lifeline if certain conditions are met: (1) participation in certain federal benefits programs (such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Federal Public Housing or the Veterans Pension and Survivor's Benefit); or (2) a household income at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. The Lifeline discount is limited to one benefit per household.

A consequence of the pandemic is the financial hardship faced by many Americans who are newly unemployed or enduring other circumstances that make them eligible for Lifeline for the first time and who may be unaware of their eligibility and/or how to apply for the program.

Co-signed by NARUC President Brandon Presley, of Mississippi, and FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, the letter highlights a goal of "...helping eligible consumers learn about and sign up for Lifeline service during this critical time" and encourages continued support for the program's efforts to "close the digital divide for low-income consumers."

A key aspect of these efforts includes the FCC's expanded access to the Lifeline National Eligibility Verifier, a centralized system used to determine consumers' eligibility for Lifeline and to assist in applications and enrollment in the program. NARUC provided essential feedback to develop this expanded access, which can be used by state public utility commissions, departments of health and human services and social service agencies to assist consumers.

Lifeline is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company and information on the National Eligibility Verifier, along with other resources, is available at [usac.org/lifeline](https://usac.org/lifeline) under [COVID-19 Response](#). The letter to commissioners is available at [bit.ly/LifelineFCCNARUC](https://bit.ly/LifelineFCCNARUC).

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### **About NARUC**

**NARUC is a non-profit organization founded in 1889 whose members include the governmental agencies that are engaged in the regulation of utilities and carriers in the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NARUC's member agencies regulate telecommunications, energy, and water utilities. NARUC represents the interests of state public utility commissions before the three branches of the federal government.**