

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to take every possible step to ensure that no American is cut off from the Lifeline program during the coronavirus pandemic.

The coronavirus and resulting public safety measures taken by states, municipalities, and vigilant citizens are a resounding demonstration of the importance of Lifeline and other FCC assistance programs. Already, Lifeline provides millions of Americans with essential help by providing discounted broadband and voice services. This assistance is needed now more than ever. Social distancing, school closures, layoffs, and shelter-in-place rules have spurred a dramatic new reliance on telework, distance education, online employment, and telehealth. No one should have their health put at risk, employment undermined, access to education denied, or face isolation because they cannot afford broadband access.

We commend the FCC for its Keep Americans Connected Pledge and for taking steps to waive reverification requirements that could hinder Lifeline. However, the FCC should go further to address the pressing economic, social, and safety needs of the public. Despite its laudable work during this crisis, the Commission has previously imposed limits and registration requirements on Lifeline and eligible telecommunications carriers that could inhibit enrollment, disconnect subscribers, or curtail use of the program. Too many eligible individuals face delays, denials, and disconnections because of paperwork issues and arcane rules. Moreover, with sudden business closures, reduced hours, and new financial pressures, more Americans will qualify for assistance and need this help. Lifeline should be able to keep up with an expected increase of demand.

We strongly urge the FCC to commit that no one loses access to Lifeline at this time of crisis. Congress has invested the FCC with emergency powers to waive, suspend, or revise its policies and regulations for challenging times. The FCC should use these authorities to take every action necessary to ensure that Lifeline is available and fits the needs of subscribers. The Commission should also take swift steps to provide information about Lifeline to the public and

ensure carriers more aggressively advertise their Lifeline services to all eligible individuals. Americans must know that help is available.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate



Edward J. Markey
United States Senate



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senate



Brian Schatz
United States Senate