September 30, 2015

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Lifeline Modernization, WC Docket No. 11-42

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We are writing on behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the undersigned organizations and companies that work directly with and advocate for low-income people, seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, educators, and historically disenfranchised people. While our work in these diverse communities varies, each of our organizations can point to the importance of broadband Internet access as a vital tool for our constituents. Yet the digital divide between those who have a broadband Internet connection and those who do not continues to persist. Cost remains a critical barrier. For this reason, we write to support the Federal Communications Commission's proposal to modernize the Lifeline program this year by including it, for the first time, a subsidy to defray the cost of broadband access for low-income households.

Access to broadband enables access to education and job opportunities, invaluable health information, and social services. Broadcom is essential for anyone who goes to school or seeks to further enhance their skills. Seven in ten teachers assign homework that requires the Internet and yet 5 million households with children don’t have home access, leading to a “homework gap.”\(^1\) Obtaining a job without access to the kinds of training programs or education available online that can help jobseekers upgrade skills in the modern economy is a daunting proposition. And more than 80 percent of Fortune 500 companies, including companies like Wal-Mart and Target, only accept job applications online.\(^2\) The effectiveness of federal and state programs and health care providers to assist seniors, veterans and people with disabilities would improve dramatically if all those populations could communicate via broadband. And despite libraries’ Herculean efforts to serve the unserved, nearly seven out of 10 public libraries report they do not have enough computers to meet demand all or some part of the day.\(^3\)

Though Internet access is a tool that has revolutionized almost every sector and every part of our personal lives, substantial numbers of people still do not have access. While 92 percent
of households with incomes between $100,000 and $150,000 have broadband service, the adoption rate is only:

- 47 percent for households with income below $25,000;\(^4\)
- 64 percent for African Americans and 53 percent for Hispanics;\(^5\)
- 63 percent for people with disabilities;\(^6\)
- 56 percent for people age 65 and over;\(^7\)
- 51 percent for people with limited English proficiency;\(^8\)
- 38 percent for households that prefer Spanish.\(^9\)

Cost is often cited as one of the most important reasons households do not have, or lose, their broadband subscriptions.\(^{10}\) The federal Lifeline program can alleviate this costly burden.

We urge you to modernize the Lifeline program this year to include broadband and ensure that all people in the U.S. have fair access to modern and essential communications services.

Sincerely,

[List of organizations]

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\(^{1}\) Source: FCC 2012.
\(^{2}\) Source: FCC 2012.
\(^{3}\) Source: FCC 2012.
\(^{4}\) Source: PwC 2013.
\(^{5}\) Source: PwC 2013.
\(^{6}\) Source: PwC 2013.
\(^{7}\) Source: PwC 2013.
\(^{8}\) Source: PwC 2013.
\(^{9}\) Source: PwC 2013.
\(^{10}\) Source: FCC 2012.
Community Development Authority of Marshfield, Wisconsin
Community Power Network of NYS
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf
Connecting for Good
Crossroads Urban Center
Connecticut Association for Community Action
Daughters of Charity
G III Associates
God's Will In Action
Good Shepherd Community
Graceworks Housing Services
Graceworks Lutheran Services
Groundcover News
Hawaii County Economic Opportunity Council
Homeless & Housing Coalition of Kentucky
Housing and Education Alliance
Human Facets International
Hunger Action Los Angeles
Hunger Free Vermont
Illinois Felician Associates
IMPRUVE Paratransit Riders
International Arts/Humanities Institute
Justice in Aging
Lake County Minority Health Organization
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Lopez Community Land Trust
Madison Social Services
Manchester Community Technologies, Inc.
Martha O'Bryan Center
Matrix Human Services
Media Alliance
Medical Mission Sisters
Mental Health America
Midland Development Corporation
Military Assistance Project
Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASASA)
National Alliance on Mental Illness North Carolina
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council on Aging
National Digital Inclusion Alliance
National Disability Rights Network
National PTA
Nazareth Housing Inc.
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
New York State Community Action Association
Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, Inc.
Northwest Health Law Advocates
NY State Council of Churches
OCA National Center
OCA - Georgia, Greater Chicago, Greater Houston, Greater Seattle, Wisconsin, DC, and Long Island Chapters
Ohio Community Leadership Council
Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension
Partners Bridging the Digital Divide
PathWays PA
People for Public Toilets Coalition
PeterCares House
Pittsburgh Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Placer Independent Resource Services
Preservation of Affordable Housing
Provincial Council of the Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)
Public Justice Center
Public Knowledge
RESULTS
Safe Home Program, YWCA Hanover, Pennsylvania
Salaam Legal Network & Citizens Council for Human Rights
Senior Legislative Action Committee of Sullivan County New York
Senior Service America, Inc.  United States Society for Augmentative and
Servants of Jesus, Michigan Alternative Communication (USSAAC)
Shepherds Heart Utahns Against Hunger
Sisters of Charity Federation Vecinos Unidos, Inc.
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, Leadership Veterans For Peace-NYC Chapter 34
Team West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition
St. Paul Trinity Community Westside Center for Independent Living
Tech Goes Home WinstonNet
Teens, Training, and Taxes Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Torrance County Project Office Young Invincibles
Trinity Community Youth Policy Institute
United Spinal Association YWCA Central Alabama
UPTE-CWA 9119 YWCA of the Greater Capital Region (NY), Inc.
Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio

2 Gerry Smith, Without Internet, Urban Poor Fear Being Left Behind, Huffington Post (March 2012).
3 American Library Association, Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study (2011-2012).
6 ACS 2013 at Table 1.
7 Id.
8 Id.