



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

November 12, 2015

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your letter concerning the need to facilitate the enrollment of our Nation's veterans in the Lifeline program. The Commission recognizes the valuable role the Lifeline program can play in veterans' lives, particularly as they transition from the armed services to civilian employment. As you state, the Lifeline program has been helping veterans stay connected for over 30 years, and I share your interest in coordinating outreach efforts and creating coordinated enrollment opportunities to ease burdens on participants in the program and to coordinate outreach efforts to assist veterans who need Lifeline service to manage their day-to-day lives.

In your letter, you detail the importance of data technology as a vital capability for low-income and homeless veterans. I could not agree more. Broadband allows veterans to participate more fully in our society and economy and to effectively manage the benefits they have earned through serving our country. Importantly, veterans also obtain better health care when they have broadband access – a recent study indicated that veterans with access to telehealth applications had significantly fewer hospital enrollments and bed days of care¹ – and broadband can help provide enhanced quality of life.

Your letter is extremely timely, as the Commission has already begun the process of updating its Lifeline rules. In June, the Commission sought comment on several ways to potentially increase veterans' access to the Lifeline program. *First*, the Commission sought comment on how to coordinate Lifeline outreach and enrollment efforts with the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program, or any other federal program designed to assist vulnerable veterans.² *Second*, the Commission sought comment on whether veterans and their families who are eligible for the Veterans Pension benefit should automatically qualify for

¹ Adam Darkins et al., *Care Coordination/Home Telehealth: The Systematic Implementation of Health Informatics, Home Telehealth, and Disease Management to Support the Care of Veteran Patients with Chronic Conditions*, 14 *Telemedicine and e-Health* 1118, 1118-26 (2008), <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/tmj.2008.0021> (last visited September 29, 2015).

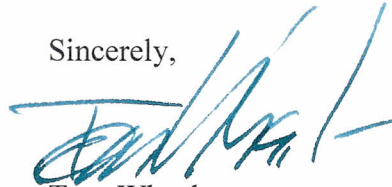
² *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization*, et al., WC Docket No. 11-42 et al., Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Order on Reconsideration, Second Report and Order, and Memorandum Opinion and Order, 30 FCC Rcd 7818, 7856, para. 102 (2015).

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Lifeline support.³ *Finally*, the Commission sought comment on ways to increase the awareness of the Lifeline program to low-income veterans.⁴

As the Commission moves forward with its plan to modernize the Lifeline program, I look forward to finding ways to ensure that vulnerable veterans are aware of the Lifeline program and the benefits it can bring to their lives. I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler

³ *Id.* at 7861, para. 115.

⁴ *Id.*