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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 in 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. Broadband 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."<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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;<sup>4</sup>
- 64 percent for African Americans and 53 percent for Hispanics;<sup>5</sup>
- 63 percent for people with disabilities;<sup>6</sup>
- 56 percent for people age 65 and over;<sup>7</sup>
- 51 percent for people with limited English proficiency;<sup>8</sup>
- 38 percent for households that prefer Spanish.<sup>9</sup>

Cost is often cited as one of the most important reasons households do not have, or lose, their broadband subscriptions.<sup>10</sup> 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,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
2 God B The Glory, Inc., Supportive Housing  
9to5, National Association of Working Women  
ACCSES  
AIDS Project Los Angeles  
Almost Home, Inc.  
Arizona Asian American Association  
Arizona Community Action Association  
Ashbury Senior Computer Community Center  
Asian American Psychological Association  
Asian and Latino Community Services, Inc.  
Asian Law Alliance  
Association of Assistive Technology Act  
Programs  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity  
Programs  
Augustinian Defenders of the Rights of the Poor  
Austin Free - Net  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Axiom Technologies  
AYUDA, Inc.  
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore  
Bethany Community Services, Inc.  
Bethel Community

Brain Injury Association of America  
Bronx Jewish Community Council, Inc.  
Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition  
Consortia of Administrators for Native  
American Rehabilitation, Inc. (CANAR, Inc.)  
Casa Major, Inc.  
Cascade AIDS Project  
Community Development Corporation Resource  
Consortium, Inc. (CDCRC Inc.)  
Center for Independent Living of South Jersey,  
Inc.  
Chelan-Douglas Community Action  
Chicago House and Social Service Agency  
Child Care Aware of America  
Child Care Council of Suffolk Inc.  
Children First Family Child Care  
Church Women United in New York State  
Claire Heureuse Community Center, Inc.  
Clarity of Mind Counseling  
Cleveland Housing Network  
Common Sense Kids Action  
Community Action of Skagit County  
Community Action Partnership  
Community Action Partnership Association of  
Idaho

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 (NAPAFASA)  
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.  
Servants of Jesus, Michigan  
Shepherds Heart  
Sisters of Charity Federation  
Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, Leadership  
Team  
St. Paul Trinity Community  
Tech Goes Home  
Teens, Training, and Taxes  
Torrance County Project Office  
Trinity Community  
United Spinal Association  
UPTE-CWA 9119  
Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio

United States Society for Augmentative and  
Alternative Communication (USSAAC)  
Utahns Against Hunger  
Vecinos Unidos, Inc.  
Veterans For Peace-NYC Chapter 34  
West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition  
Westside Center for Independent Living  
WinstonNet  
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice  
Young Invincibles  
Youth Policy Institute  
YWCA Central Alabama  
YWCA of the Greater Capital Region (NY), Inc.

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<sup>1</sup> Common Sense Kids Action Policy Brief, *The Benefits of Broadband Expansion to America's Economy, Education and Health* (June 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Gerry Smith, *Without Internet, Urban Poor Fear Being Left Behind*, Huffington Post (March 2012).

<sup>3</sup> American Library Association, *Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study* (2011-2012).

<sup>4</sup> File, Thom and Camille Ryan, *Computer and Internet Use in the United States: 2013*, American Community Survey Reports, ACS-28, U.S. Census Bureau, Table 1 (2014) (ACS 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Zickuhr, Kathryn and Aaron Smith, *Home Broadband 2013*, Pew Research Center at 3 (Aug 2013).

<sup>6</sup> ACS 2013 at Table 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Lee Rainie, Director, Pew Internet and American Life Project, Presentation at Washington Post Live 2013 Bridging the Digital Divide forum (Nov. 5, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Aaron Smith, Pew Research Center, *U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015* (April 2015).