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For Immediate Release**FCC WAIVES LIFELINE PROGRAM RULES TO HELP
LOW-INCOME CONSUMERS DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

Agency's Latest Step to Keep Americans Connected During COVID-19 Outbreak

WASHINGTON, March 17, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today announced changes to the Lifeline program to assist program participants potentially affected by the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic and aid community efforts to slow its spread. The Lifeline program plays an important role in ensuring that low-income Americans have access to affordable communications services by providing monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying consumers. Today's changes are part of the FCC's Keep Americans Connected Initiative to ensure that consumers stay connected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In today's Order, the Wireline Competition Bureau waives the Lifeline program's recertification and reverification requirements for participating low-income consumers for 60 days. The Bureau also waives for 60 days the *2019 Lifeline Order's* requirement that participating carriers' enrollment representatives register with the Lifeline program administrator, the Universal Service Administrative Company. These changes will ease burdens on Lifeline subscribers during the coronavirus pandemic and allow Lifeline carriers to focus their efforts on assisting customers.

"As Americans across the country turn to online services to enable social distancing measures, the importance of access to affordable communications, especially for low-income households, has only increased," said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. "During times of crisis, maintaining connections to family and friends, medical professionals and educators, and your coworkers is imperative, and I don't want any American consumers experiencing hardships because of the pandemic to lose connectivity. That's why I recently announced the Keep Americans Connected Pledge to address the challenges that many Americans, particularly low-income Americans, will face in the coming months."

Today's Lifeline waivers constitute the latest step in the FCC's efforts to ensure that Americans benefit from communications technologies in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Last week, Chairman Pai announced the Keep Americans Connected Pledge, under which broadband and telephone providers committed to not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic; waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and open their Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them. Additionally, Chairman Pai exhorted those companies with low-income broadband programs like the Connect2Compete program to expand and improve them (for example, by increasing speeds to 25/3 Mbps and

expanding eligibility) and those without to adopt such programs. He also called on telephone carriers to waive long-distance and overage fees in appropriate circumstances.

The Order is available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xdtPZ>. To learn more about the FCC's Keep Americans Connected Initiative, visit fcc.gov/coronavirus.

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