Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of	**)**	
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Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization	**)**	WC Docket No. 11-42
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COMMENTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ANNENBERG CENTER ON
COMMUNICATION LEADERSHIP & POLICY

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SUMMARY

The USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy ("CCLP") respectfully submits this Comment to the Commission in response to Proceeding 11-42, in the matter of Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization. Based on three convenings hosted by CCLP and the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands, and on research and expert interviews about the need for mobile phones to be better configured for public safety and health, CCLP offers the following recommendations for the next phase of Lifeline reform.

The Commission should, to the maximum extent possible, and through the appropriate mechanisms, ensure that Eligible Telecommunication Carriers (ETCs) receiving funding from the Lifeline program: (1) provide phones and plans that allow for at least minimum text messaging and broadband; (2) provide phones that are equipped with an activated frequency modulation (FM) chip to enable all Lifeline users to receive life-saving information during emergencies when cell phone networks are overwhelmed; and (3) adopt Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and provide phones that are WEA-capable.

Each of these recommendations will help to ensure that the United States continues working toward a public safety system that works for all Americans, from every socio-economic background and in every region of the country. As Congressman Fred Upton, Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, has said, "What we must strive for is an emergency system that leaves no one behind."[1]

These recommendations are based on current technological capabilities, but the Commission should consider other phone and plan features that may become necessary to maintain public safety and health as technology evolves. Moreover, CCLP recommends that the Commission: (1) inquire whether ETCs' limits on voice minutes for Lifeline participants negatively impacts their access to safety and health resources; and (2) reexamine the statutory definition of "household" with respect to Lifeline services only being available for one phone line per eligible household. These minimum recommendations are required to fulfill the Lifeline program's core mission of "ensur[ing] that all Americans have the opportunities and security that phone service brings, including being able to connect to jobs, family and emergency services."[2]

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[1] Comment by Fred Upton, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, Hearing on *H.R. 5785, The Warning, Alert, and Response Network Act of 2006* before the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet of the Committee on Energy and Commerce House of Representatives (July 20, 2006), available at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109hhrg30532/html/CHRG-109hhrg30532.htm.
[2] *Lifeline Program for Low-Income Consumers*, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONS (January 22, 2015), http://www.fcc.gov/lifeline.

Comments of the University of Southern California Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy (CCLP)

I.   Introduction

In 1985, the Federal Communications Commission ("the Commission") established the Lifeline program ("Lifeline") "to ensure that all Americans have the opportunities and security that phone service brings, including being able to connect to jobs, family and emergency services."[3] The goal of reaching "all Americans" reflects the principle of universal service, which is a foundational component of the law that created the Commission, the Communications Act of 1934.[4] Moreover, the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, makes clear that an integral part of universal service is the guarantee that "consumers in all regions of the Nation, including low-income consumers…have access to telecommunications and information services"[5] and that "all providers of telecommunications services should make an equitable and nondiscriminatory contribution to the preservation and advancement of universal service."[6] When the Lifeline program first launched in 1985, it provided landline phone service to qualifying households. But during the second Bush administration, as cell phones began to replace landline phones as Americans' primary means of staying connected, the program expanded to include mobile devices. Today, a majority of new Lifeline subscriptions are for mobile phones.[7] And for many Americans – including veterans, senior citizens, the disabled, and the temporarily unemployed – "Lifeline support can be the only means for regularly staying in touch with a doctor, applying for a job, or contacting 911 during an emergency."[8]

The Commission and its Lifeline program were created with an understanding that phone service can be crucial for public safety and health. The Communications Act of 1934, as well as the updated Telecommunications Act of 1996, stated that Federal programs providing telecommunication services "shall consider the extent to which" those services "are essential to education, public health, or public safety."[9] Moreover, both the Communications Act of 1934 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996 recognized the fluid nature of telecommunications services: "Universal service is an evolving level of telecommunications services" that takes "into account advances in telecommunications and information technologies and services."[10] Prior to the advancement of phone technology, other telecommunications systems in the U.S. were

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[3] *Id.*

[4] *Universal Service*, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONS (April 10, 2015), http://www.fcc.gov/lifeline.http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/universal-service.

[5] Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. § 254(b)(3) (1982 and Supp. V 1987).

[6] Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. § 254(b)(4) (1982 and Supp. V 1987).

[7] Universal Service Administrative Company, Distribution of Low Income Disbursements between Wireless and Other ETCs: January 2009 through September 2014, available at http://www.usac.org/_res/documents/about/pdf/quarterly-stats/LI/Distribution-of-Disbursements-Between-Wireless-&-Other-ETCs.pdf.

[8] Comment by Anna G. Eshoo, Ranking Member of the Communications and Technology Subcommittee, Hearing on *The Lifeline Fund: Money Will Spent?* before the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology of the Committee on Energy and Commerce House of Representatives (April 25, 2013), available at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg82189/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg82189.pdf.

[9] Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. § 254(c)(1)(A) (1982 and Supp. V 1987); Telecommunications Act of 1996, Pub. LA. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996).

[10] *Id.*

charged with disseminating critical safety information during times of emergency. Although radio stations and networks could interrupt regularly scheduled programming to broadcast emergency information prior to 1951, it was in that year that President Truman officially granted the Commission the power to establish CONELRAD, the first national emergency broadcast program in the U.S.[11] CONELRAD was replaced by the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) in 1963, which was replaced by the Emergency Alert System (EAS) in 1997.[12] As these emergency broadcast systems evolved, they took into account the advancement of telecommunications technology, which is why EAS messages are transmitted via a multitude of mediums (e.g., AM, FM, TV, cable systems, satellite, wireline video providers).[13]

In recent years, cell phones have emerged as a particularly important source for receiving information during emergencies. In 2008, the Commission began to implement the Commercial Mobile Telephone Alerts (CMAS), a system that enabled mobile carriers to transmit emergency information to their subscribers.[14] However, as telecommunications technology evolves, the ways people use phone services to maintain their safety and health change. As a result of recent advances in telecommunications technology, mobile phone use is at an all-time high across the nation, and an increasing number of people rely on their mobile phones not just during times of emergency, but also to fulfill other safety and health needs.[15] Mobile connectivity varies greatly by socioeconomic status, which has created a stark gap in access between low-income consumers and their wealthier counterparts.[16] Lifeline is crucial for bridging the gap in connectivity and improving public safety and health for all Americans. By implementing the updates and improvements suggested herein,[17] the Lifeline program can continue to respond to technological advances and better fulfill its commitment to helping provide universal service.

II.   Recommendations for Modernizing and Reforming Lifeline

In order to maximize access to crucial information related to public safety and health, mobile phones provided under the Lifeline program must meet basic technical requirements. Currently, there is significant variance in the phones and plans that different ETCs offer consumers using the Lifeline subsidy, which can lead to uneven access to public safety and health information and resources.[18] The Commission should take steps to ensure that ETCs: (1) provide phones and plans that allow for at least minimum text messaging and broadband; (2) provide phones that are equipped with an activated frequency modulation (FM) chip; and (3) adopt Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and provide phones that are WEA-capable.

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[11] C.H. STERLING & C. O'DELL (EDS.). (2011). THE CONCISE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN RADIO 179 (Routledge 2011).

[12] Id. at 180.

[13] FCC, Emergency Alert System (EAS), http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/emergency-alert-system-eas(last visited Apr. 23, 2015).

[14] FCC, Commercial Mobile Telephone Alerts (CMAS), http://transition.fcc.gov/pshs/services/cmas.html (last visited Apr. 23, 2015). This program is now known as Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA).

[15] See Appendix B of this Comment for a detailed discussion on the importance of mobile phones for public safety and health.

[16] See Appendix B, section 3 of this Comment for a discussion on how mobile connectivity varies by socioeconomic status.

[17] See Summary of this Comment for an overview of CCLP's recommendations.

[18] See Appendix A of this Comment for a detailed discussion on the variance in the phones and plans that ETCs offer Lifeline participants.

1. Provide phones and plans that allow for text messaging and broadband

The Commission, to the maximum extent possible, should ensure that ETCs supply Lifeline participants with phones and plans allowing for at least minimum text messaging and broadband. In the words of the FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn, "Broadband is the greatest equalizer of our time."[19] However, Lifeline participants are often unable to access broadband or text messaging services due to phone and/or service limitations. ETCs vary significantly in the plans and phones that they offer Lifeline participants.[20] This is problematic because texting[21] and Internet access are becoming increasingly important in times of emergency, and for fulfilling basic health needs such as such as finding a doctor, researching medication, or accessing online health records.[22] This can be especially important for low-income consumers who may not have access to the Internet at home or at work.[23] Thus, to guarantee that no one is left behind in emergencies, the Commission should ensure that Lifeline cell phones and plans have minimum texting and broadband capabilities.[24]

2. Provide phones that are equipped with an activated FM chip

The Commission should ensure that ETCs provide phones equipped with an activated FM chip for Lifeline consumers. People often depend on broadcast radio stations to provide them with essential information during emergencies (e.g., about the nature of the emergency, evacuation orders, and local relief supplies).[25] In fact, radio has been a primary provider of emergency broadcasting services in the U.S. throughout its history.[26] Moreover, cell phone networks often fail during emergencies.[27] Providing Lifeline participants with phones containing an activated FM chip would help ensure their connection to this vital information even when cellular networks are damaged or inoperable during an emergency. In the words of Craig Fugate, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), "Smartphones with the

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[19] FCC, Commissioner Clyburn Remarks before the American Enterprise Institute, http://www.fcc.gov/document/commissioner-clyburn-remarks-american-enterprise-institute (Nov. 12, 2014).

[20] As summarized by Commissioner Clyburn, "Too many providers offer a similar set of the de minimis 250 minutes with any additional time or texts coming at a huge cost. This level of stagnation must be addressed and modified," *Id.* at 5; *see also* Appendix A of this Comment for a detailed discussion on the variance in the phones and plans that ETCs offer Lifeline participants.

[21] *E.g.*, The Text-to-911 program, which is expanding throughout the nation, enables mobile users to reach 911 emergency call takers via text message. *What You Need to Know About Text-to-911*, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONS (Feb. 20, 2015), *http://www.fcc.gov/text-to-911*.

[22] *See* Appendix B of this Comment for a detailed discussion on the importance of mobile phones for public safety and health.

[23] Zickhur & Smith, *supra* note 9.

[24] This Comment recognizes the efforts the FCC has already taken with the Lifeline Broadband Pilot program to understand how best to increase broadband adoption among low-income Americans. Helping ensure that those ETCs which choose to offer mobile devices to Lifeline participants understand the importance of providing Internet-capable devices is one small part of increasing levels of connectivity.

[25] *See* Paul Haaga & Jon McTaggart, *In times of crisis, FM chips in smartdevices will better service public*, Current.org: For People in Public Media (Jan. 22, 2014), http://www.current.org/2014/01/in-times-of-crisis-fm-chips-in-smartdevices-will-better-serve-public//.

[26] *See* Introduction of this Comment for an overview of the history of emergency broadcasting in the U.S.

[27] Brad Stone, *Why Cell Phone Networks Fail in Emergencies,* Bloomberg Business (Apr. 16, 2013), http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2013-04-16/why-cell-phone-networks-fail-in-emergencies.

FM chip would just be another way to be sure that when all else fails you can still get information, because government is going to turn to the broadcasters and we're going to pump information through them."[28] However, although most smartphones currently manufactured contain an FM chip,[29] phones used by low-income consumers participating in Lifeline often lack an activated FM chip.[30] Activating these chips would be an efficient and cost effective way to improve public safety because there is no cost for mobile phone companies to activate them and accessing broadcast radio is free for consumers.[31] Public safety would be improved if the Commission were to require or incentivize ETCs to include an activated FM chip in cell phones offered with the Lifeline program.

3. Adopt WEA and provide phones that are WEA-capable

The Commission should require or incentivize ETCs to adopt WEA and ensure that cell phones offered alongside the Lifeline program are WEA-capable. WEA was rolled out in 2012 and there are currently three types of alerts: (1) presidential alerts, (2) imminent threat alerts, and (3) AMBER alerts.[32] In addition to having a WEA-capable device, users must receive services from a carrier that has adopted WEA.[33] Users are not charged for receiving the alerts and are automatically enrolled to receive them if their carriers are adopters.[34] Thus, WEA alerts are an efficient and cost effective way for people to receive pertinent information during emergencies. However, mobile phones offered to Lifeline users are often not WEA-capable[35] and only a small

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[28] *FEMA Administrator Touts Radio and FM Chip*, Radio Ink (Oct. 21, 2014), http://www.radioink.com/article.asp?id=2852599&spid=24698; Gordon H. Smith, President and CEO of the National Association of Broadcasters, also emphasizes the importance of activating FM chips: "We strongly urge all wireless carriers to voluntarily activate their customers' FM chips that are already installed in mobile devices to provide Americans with access to a lifesaving service," *FEMA Administrator praises FM chips, radio's role during emergency*, National Association of Broadcasters (Oct. 20, 2014), http://www.nab.org/documents/newsroom/pressRelease.asp?id=3523.

[29] *See* Brendan Kinney, *Unlock the FM Radio Hiding in Your Smart Phone*, VPR (Dec. 8, 2014), http://digital.vpr.net/post/unlock-fm-radio-hiding-your-smart-phone; Paul Haaga & Jon McTaggart, *In times of crisis, FM chips in smartdevices will better service public*, Current.org: For People in Public Media (Jan. 22, 2014), http://www.current.org/2014/01/in-times-of-crisis-fm-chips-in-smartdevices-will-better-serve-public/.

[30] *See* U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Science and Technology, Wireless Emergency Alerts: Mobile Penetration Strategy, http://www.firstresponder.gov/TechnologyDocuments/Wireless%20Emergency%20Alerts%20Mobile%20Penetratio n%20Strategy.pdf (July 2013), for an analysis of how phones provided through the Lifeline program are usually low-cost feature phones that lack the capabilities of sophisticated smartphones. *See also* Emma Bowma, *The Hidden FM Radio Inside Your Pocket, And Why You Can't Use It,* NPR (Apr. 16, 2015), http://www.npr.org/blogs/alltechconsidered/2015/04/16/400178385/the-hidden-fm-radio-inside-your-pocket-and-why-you-cant-use-it, which states more generally that "the FM chip is not activated on two-thirds of devices."

[31] *Id.*

[32] FEMA, Wireless Emergency Alerts, https://www.fema.gov/wireless-emergency-alerts (last visited Mar. 23, 2015).

[33] FCC, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), http://www.fcc.gov/guides/wireless-emergency-alerts-wea (last visited Mar. 23, 2015).

[34] CTIA: The Wireless Association, Wireless Emergency Alerts (Nov. 2013), http://www.ctia.org/your-wireless-life/consumer-tips/wireless-emergency-alerts.

[35] *See* U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Science and Technology, *supra* note 22 at 83, which concludes that "phones provided by [Lifeline] are low-cost feature phones, with a slower than normal turnover rate and reduced likelihood of being WEA-capable than more expensive smartphones"; *see also Wireless Emergency Alerts*, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONS (Oct. 8, 2014), http://www.fcc.gov/guides/wireless-emergency-alerts-wea.

fraction of the current ETCs have adopted WEA alerts.[36] Therefore, to improve public safety the FCC should require or incentivize ETCs to adopt WEA alerts and ensure that all their Lifeline phones are WEA-capable.[37]

B.   Further Areas for Commission Review

CCLP recommends that the Commission also: (1) inquire whether ETCs' limits on voice minutes for Lifeline participants negatively impacts their access to safety and health resources; and (2) reexamine the statutory definition of "household" with respect to Lifeline services only being available for one phone line per eligible household.

1. Limits on Lifeline customers' voice minutes

CCLP's review of ETCs' websites revealed that there is significant variance in the phones and plans that different ETCs offer Lifeline participants.[38] Some ETCs offer unlimited voice minutes to Lifeline participants,[39] while others set limits.[40] This negatively impacts those Lifeline participants who deplete their minutes during the month and are thus unable to use their mobile phones to maintain their safety and health, especially during times of emergency. Moreover, ETCs could raise the voice minute limits (or abolish the limits altogether) for their Lifeline customers without incurring substantial cost.[41] If the Commission determines that ETCs' limits on voice minutes inhibit Lifeline participants' access to health and safety resources, it should make program changes designed to maximize low-income consumers' health and safety.

2. Reexamine the statutory definition of "household"

Currently, only one Lifeline service (either landline or wireless) is allowed per household. A household is defined as "any individual or group of individuals who are living together at the same address as one economic unit."[42] Using household units as the metric for

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[36] According to the FCC Master WEA Carrier Registry File, 103 commercial mobile carriers are participating in the WEA program (either "in part" or "in whole"). However, even if all of these are ETCs, that is still a small fraction of the approximately 2,000 ETCs that offer Lifeline services. FCC, *supra* note 12 (last updated Mar. 2, 2015). *See also* Appendix A of this Comment for a more detailed discussion on the variance in the phones and plans that ETCs offer Lifeline participants.

[37] For a detailed analysis of the benefits of receiving WEAs, *see* U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Science and Technology, *supra* note 22.

[38] *See* Appendix A of this Comment for a detailed discussion on the variance in the phones and plans that ETCs offer Lifeline participants.

[39] *E.g.,* T-Mobile, http://www.t-mobile.com (last visited Mar. 21, 2015); Budget Mobile, http://www.budgetmobile.com/california/ (last visited April 8, 2015).

[40] Assurance Wireless, http://www.assurancewireless.com (last visited Mar. 21, 2015); Verizon, http://www.verizonwireless.com (last visited Mar. 21, 2015).

[41] *See* Rags Srinivasan, *What's behind the price signaling between Verizon and AT&T?*, Gigacom (Jul. 8, 2012), https://gigaom.com/2012/07/08/whats-behind-the-price-signaling-between-verizon-and-att/; *see also* Justist Haucap, *The Economics Of Mobile Telephone Regulation*, Institute fur Economic Policy at the University of the Federal Armed Forces Hamburg, p. 2 (March 2003), http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~jmueller/its/conf/helsinki03/papers/Haucap1.pdf, who concludes that "the main part of a mobile telephone operator's costs therefore does not vary with the number of participants, calls or connection minutes, but it is fixed and, furthermore, to a large extent also sunk."

[42] 47 C.F.R. § 54.400(h).

distributing Lifeline subsidies was logical when people primarily used landlines. However, this restriction is problematic in the contemporary communications world where it is common practice for people to bring their mobile phone with them at all times.[43] For example, if a person is in a car accident while their Lifeline phone is with their spouse, this undermines the program's purpose of helping ensure that all people have access to emergency services. Thus, multiple people in a family and/or household may need access to a phone from different locations in order to maintain their safety and health. Lifeline's limitation of subsidies to one per household is in direct response to previous issues of fraud and abuse within the program,[44] but the Commission should explore options for allowing multiple family members in a low-income household to qualify for Lifeline.

III.   Conclusion

The Commission's Lifeline program has long served as a crucial program for improving phone-service penetration rates. Today, it can help to fill the gaps in connectivity for low-income consumers, thereby helping to ensure the safety and well-being of all Americans. By taking into account the above recommendations, Lifeline can better achieve its purpose of "ensur[ing] that all Americans have the opportunities and security that phone service brings, including being able to connect to jobs, family and emergency services."[45]

Respectfully submitted,

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[43] Pew Research Center, Mobile Technology Fact Sheet, http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/mobile-technology-fact-sheet/ (Jan. 2014).
[44] *FCC Reports on Major Reforms to Lifeline Program*, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONS (Feb. 12, 2013), http://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-reports-major-reforms-lifeline-program.
[45] *Lifeline Program for Low-Income Consumers*, *supra* note 1.

**Eligible Telecommunication Carriers Across the Nation Impact Low-Income Consumers'
Participation in the Lifeline Program**

Presently, Lifeline is available to consumers in every state, territory, commonwealth, and
Tribal land in the nation (including the American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, Virgin
Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam).[46] However, the percentage of eligible people participating in
Lifeline varies widely across the states.

1.   Eligible Telecommunication Carriers

There are approximately 2,000 active carriers that are designated as an Eligible
Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) through the Lifeline program.[47] Currently, there are two
ways for a wireless carrier to be designated as an ETC: (1) by a state commission, or (2) by the
Commission.[48] States have the first option for designating ETCs, but if states have not asserted
jurisdiction, then the Commission can. States that do not provide intrastate Lifeline support and
are therefore subject to the Commission's administrative procedures and guidelines are known as
"federal default states."[49]

ETCs include larger well-known carriers (e.g., T-Mobile, AT&T Mobility, Sprint,
Verizon Wireless),[50] and smaller carriers, which include mobile virtual network operators
(MVNOs) (e.g., Assurance Wireless, Access Wireless, Safelink Wireless, Reachout Wireless,
Budget Mobile, Boost Mobile, Cricket Communications). Some MVNOs are more similar to
major carriers in that they provide a wide range of telecommunication services (e.g., Internet,
cable, landlines), while others operate only to provide mobile services for low-income
consumers.[51]

2.   Variance Across ETCs' Phones and Plans

ETCs are statutorily required to allow low-income consumers to apply their subsidy to
telephone voice service.[52] They also have the option of allowing these consumers to apply their
subsidy to bundled packages that include data and text messaging.[53] However, since voice
service is the only requirement, ETCs across the country vary widely in the phones and plans
that they offer their consumers. Moreover, the same ETC sometimes offers different phones and
plans to its Lifeline participants in different states.[54] This variability can lead to unequal access to

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[46] *Id.*

[47] USAC, Lifeline Support, http://www.lifelinesupport.org/ls/ (last visited Mar. 21, 2015).

[48] *47 C.F.R. § 54.201*

[49] United States GAO, Improved Management Can Enhance FCC Decision Making for the Universal Service Fund
Low-Income Program, http://www.gao.gov/assets/320/312708.pdf, p. 12 (Oct. 2010).

[50] FCC, Sixteenth Report, ¶ 43 http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0321/FCC-13-
34A1.pdf (2013).

[51] *Id.* at ¶ 29.

[52] 47 C.F.R. § 54.401(a)(2).

[53] 47 C.F.R. § 54.401(b).

[54] *E.g.,* Assurance Wireless offers unlimited voice minutes to its Lifeline participants in California, but caps users'
voice minutes in other states. *See* California Help Center, Assurance Wireless,

safety and health resources for low-income consumers, which undermines the purpose of Lifeline.

A review of various ETCs' websites indicates that many smaller carriers provide Lifeline users with free mobile phones.[55] Moreover, some of these carriers have even begun providing smartphones for free[56] or at a highly discounted rate.[57] In addition, these small ETCs' plans frequently allow consumers to access services in addition to voice (e.g., text messaging). For example, Assurance Wireless (which is a product of Virgin Mobile USA), provides consumers with: (1) a free cell phone, (2) text messaging, and (3) 500 free minutes each month for the first four months of new Lifeline service (which is reduced to 250 free months for each subsequent month of eligibility).[58] Conversely, T-Mobile's Lifeline plan, which costs $19.99 per month (prior to the Lifeline discount, which can vary by state), includes unlimited voice calls but no text messaging or data.[59] Similarly, Verizon Wireless's plan, which costs $33.99 per month (prior to the Lifeline discount) plus a one-time $35 activation fee, includes 400 minutes to use anytime (excluding nights and weekends) and 1000 minutes of local mobile-to-mobile calling, but does not include text messaging, data service, insurance, or roadside assistance.[60] However, it is not only the larger ETCs that provide Lifeline participants with more restrictive options. Some smaller ETCs, such as Montana-provider Triangle Mobile,[61] do not offer consumers any devices, text messaging, or data with their plan.

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https://www.assurancewireless.com/public/FAQs.aspx?STATE=CA (last visited Apr. 4, 2015); *see also* Assurance Wireless, http://www.assurancewireless.com/Public/Welcome.aspx (last visited Mar. 23, 2015).

[55] *E.g.*, Assurance Wireless, http://www.assurancewireless.com/Public/Welcome.aspx (last visited Mar. 23, 2015); Reachout Wireless, https://www.reachoutmobile.com/faq (last visited Mar. 23, 2015); Budget Mobile, http://www.budgetmobile.com/ (last visited Mar. 23, 2015); TerraCom Wireless, https://www.terracomwireless.com/ (last visited Mar. 23, 2015); SafeLink Wireless, https://www.safelinkwireless.com/Enrollment/Safelink/en/NewPublic/index.html (last visited Mar. 23, 2015); Q Link Wireless, https://qlinkwireless.com/ ((ast visited Mar. 23, 2015); Tag Mobile, http://www.tagmobile.com/site/index.aspx (last visited Mar. 23, 2015); Total Call Mobile, https://www.totalcallmobile.com/lifeline.aspx (last visited Mar. 23, 2015).

[56] *E.g.,* Easy Wireless, https://myeasywireless.com/free-lifeline-android/ (last visited Mar. 23, 2015).

[57] Access Wireless, Budget Mobile, Family Mobile, Total Call Mobile, and YourTel are examples of ETCs that offer Lifeline users (in select regions) both (1) smartphones for less than $100, and (2) no contract smartphone service. Available at: http://www.solid-ground.org/Programs/ConnectUp/Documents/SmartPhonesBrochure.pdf.

[58] Assurance Wireless, http://www.assurancewireless.com (last visited Mar. 21, 2015).

[59] T-Mobile, http://www.t-mobile.com (last visited Mar. 21, 2015).

[60] Verizon, http://www.verizonwireless.com (last visited Mar. 21, 2015).

[61] Triangle-Mobile, http://www.itstrianglemobile.com (last visited Mar. 21, 2015).

Appendix B:
Mobile Engagement is Increasingly Important for Protecting People's Safety & Health

Mobile engagement is at an all-time high across the United States; 90% of American adults own a mobile phone and 63% of those use their mobile to access the Internet.[62] Moreover, according to a Pew Research Center study, 34% of people who use their mobile to access the Internet "go online mostly using their phones" in lieu of another device.[63]

1.   Mobile Engagement During Emergencies

Mobile engagement can be especially critical during times of emergency. In fact, 19% of mobile Internet users surveyed by the Pew Research Center reported relying on their phone within the past 30 days in order to get help in an emergency situation.[64] Texting and mobile Internet access are becoming increasingly important for public safety because technological innovations are impacting communication patterns during emergences. For example, "many public safety agencies are now using [smartphones] to increase efficiency among our nation's first responders"[65] as apps and other wireless communication tools enter the market.

2.   Mobile Engagement for Other Health and Safety Needs

Mobile engagement is also important for people's non-emergency health and safety needs. More basic health and safety needs, such as finding a doctor, researching medication, or accessing online health records, can be fulfilled through Internet access on mobile phones. According to a Pew Research Center study, 31% of mobile phone owners and 52% of smartphone owners surveyed used the Internet on their mobile device to access health and medical information.[66] Moreover, 19% of smartphone users reported downloading apps that help manage one's personal health.

3.   Mobile Engagement Varies by Socioeconomic Status

Regardless of increased levels of connectivity and engagement with the Internet across the United States, discrepancies in access still exist among different demographic groups. Socioeconomic status is one of the major demographic indicators to predict likelihood of access to the Internet; in fact, "those living in households earning less than $30,000 per year are the least likely adults to have internet access."[67] Thus, the Lifeline program is crucial for filling these gaps in connectivity.

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[62] Pew Research Center, *supra* note 41.
[63] *Id.*
[64] *Id.*
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