

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2012

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

We write in support of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) efforts to reform and strengthen the Universal Service Fund's Lifeline program. It is our understanding that the FCC will hold its rulemaking regarding the future of Lifeline on January 31st. Once again, we would like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving this vital program. The services provided through Lifeline are extraordinarily important to our most economically disadvantaged citizens, who would otherwise be unable to afford them. In order to ensure the integrity of the Lifeline program for years to come, as well as curb waste, fraud, and abuse, we urge you to move forward with creating a national database of Lifeline subscribers and not to institute any mandatory fees.

As you outlined in your remarks on January 9th, establishing a national database of Lifeline subscribers will go a long way to keep the program strong and efficient. In particular, we believe that your proposal for a subscriber database will significantly help eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in the program. To this end, we stand ready to assist you with the implementation of the proposed eligibility database. Furthermore, we welcome your recommendations to eliminate duplicate subscribers and opportunities for carriers to take advantage of the system as necessary steps to reform Lifeline.

In addition, we ask that the FCC not institute a "mandatory fee" or other cost prohibitions for Lifeline subscribers. Doing so would dismantle a fundamental benefit of the program, immediately making it inaccessible to a large portion of subscribers. A fee structure would also create considerable logistical hurdles for both Lifeline subscribers and carriers, e.g. many eligible residents do not have access to credit or a checking account and would have a difficult time making a payment for this service. Prior to the inclusion of cell phones in the Lifeline program, many individuals were unable to afford the subsidized landline service. Similarly, we are concerned that customers would be unable to afford mandatory fees and would be dropped from the program as a result.

Since 1984, Lifeline and the Link-Up America programs have helped provide millions of low-income Americans with vital phone service. From accessing child and medical care to emergency services and employment, the Lifeline program enables personal and economic empowerment by providing these individuals with opportunities for a better life. It is for these reasons that Lifeline has been, and continues to be, such an important program for our constituents. We are confident that Lifeline can be reformed and strengthened without imposing

arbitrary fees on subscribers, and that implementing many of the reforms suggested by your Commission will effectively end waste, fraud, and abuse. Moreover, we applaud your efforts to expand the program to include broadband internet access and ask that you also preserve the spirit of Lifeline in this endeavor.

Chairman Genachowski, thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to seeing your complete recommendations and final rulemaking for the Lifeline program at the end of this month. It is our sincere hope that this continued dialogue will serve to strengthen Lifeline in meeting the needs of low-income Americans in our 21st century economy and society. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



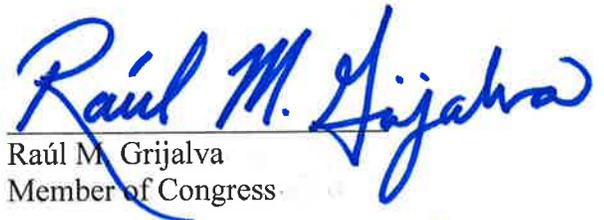
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Cedric L. Richmond
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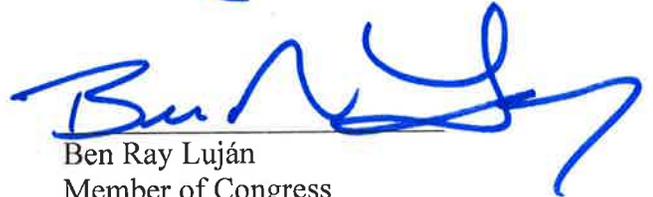
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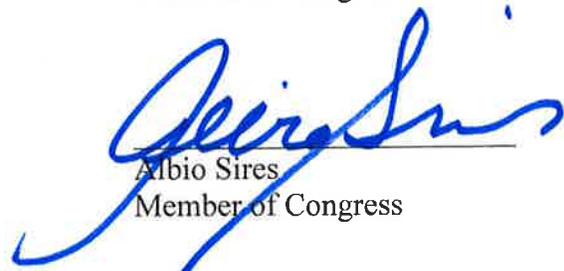
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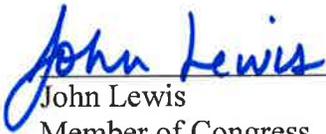
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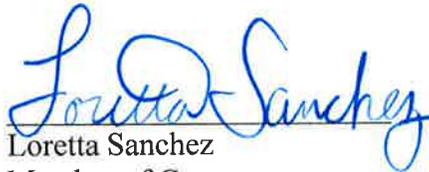
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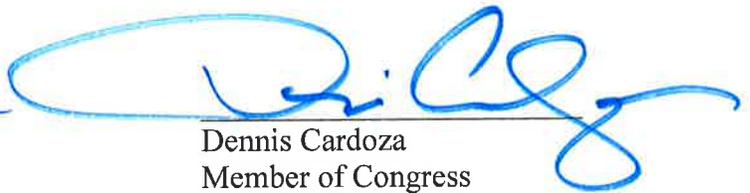
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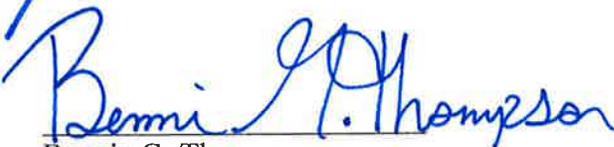
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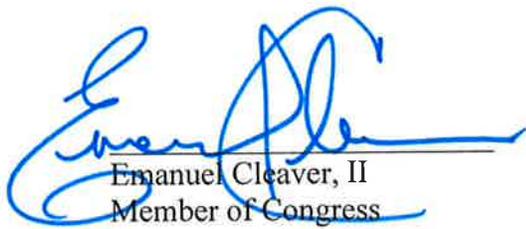
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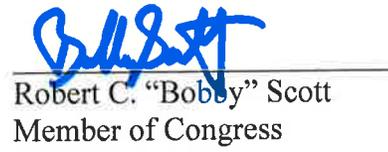
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