



Press Statement

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FCC's Proposal to Modernize Lifeline Program is a Step Forward in Closing the Digital Divide

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 28, 2015): The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) applauds today's actions by Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Tom Wheeler to "restructure and modernize" the Lifeline program to support broadband access for low-income Americans.

Chairman Wheeler's proposed program changes would increase efficiencies and "establish minimum service standards for both voice and broadband." Through these changes, the Lifeline program will be "rebooted" to assist consumers in gaining access to 21st century communications tools while providing additional protections against waste, fraud, and abuse.

As broadband has become one of the most essential tools for improving quality of life, MMTC lauds today's announcement as the next step toward ensuring access for all Americans, particularly those who are economically vulnerable or socially isolated.

"Chairman Wheeler's actions today reflect the Commission's dedication to move our nation toward an environment where everyone is guaranteed the opportunity to connect," stated MMTC President and CEO Kim M. Keenan. "Americans are increasingly relying on broadband to access education, jobs, healthcare, and other essential services, but a disproportionate number of minorities and economically vulnerable consumers rely on their smartphones to access these services. Closing the digital divide and getting everyone connected is critical and the Chairman's actions today are a major step in the right direction."

This month, MMTC signed on with a coalition of 36 national civil rights and other minority-serving organizations, advocating for immediate and comprehensive reform of the Lifeline program, which is already supported by the Universal Service Fund.

"Having consumers make the right choice for their households has always been at the core of MMTC's mission and advocacy," stated MMTC Co-Founder and President Emeritus David Honig. "In 2003, during the DTV transition, we proposed and the FCC approved a voucher system for set-top boxes – designed so that families could retain access to vital technology and decide what worked best. We see today's actions as the next step in promoting consumer choice as we work toward digital equality."

MMTC looks forward to working with the Commission on strategies for ensuring the effectiveness and success of the modernized Lifeline program.

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About MMTC:

The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) is a non-partisan, national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and civil rights in the mass media, telecommunications and broadband industries, and closing the digital divide. MMTC is generally recognized as the nation's leading advocate for minority advancement in communications.