



Press Release

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36 Diverse National Organizations Call for Modernization of Lifeline Universal Service Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 15, 2015): This week, the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) and 35 partner organizations from national civil rights, consumer and cultural organizations sent a [letter](#) to the Federal Communications Commission on behalf of consumers across America. The letter's 36 signators represent diverse and strong support among advocates for immediate and comprehensive reform of the critically important Lifeline program supported by the Universal Service Fund (USF).

"Modernizing the Lifeline program is at the core of accelerating broadband adoption for underserved communities," stated MMTC President and CEO Kim Keenan. "This letter represents the stance of a broad range of civil rights, consumer, and other minority-serving organizations that are ready to make home broadband access a reality for millions of low-income consumers."

As the letter states, bipartisan support is required to modernize the Lifeline program so millions of Americans can access the "full potential of the digital broadband age, and obtain this benefit through a more efficient and effective program." According to the Pew Research Center, many Americans, and particularly those from vulnerable communities, are heavily "smartphone dependent," relying upon their mobile devices to access essential online services that include job searching, healthcare, and education.

"Successfully upgrading the 30-year-old Lifeline program will require policymakers to embrace a new approach," said Consumer Policy Solutions President Debra Berlyn. "Offering the opportunity for more consumers to receive the benefits of broadband services is essential, and long overdue."

The letter strongly supports FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn's goal for modernization, especially by leveraging the efficiencies of coordinated enrollment through existing assistance programs such as by allowing consumers to enroll in Lifeline at the same time as they apply for other government benefits.

"It is very important for Rainbow PUSH Coalition to reach people where they are," stated Rainbow PUSH Public Policy Institute Executive Director Steven Smith. "Today, too many people have to choose between broadband and other services, and it's the time to make access more affordable and accessible."

The letter also aligns with statements made by FCC Commissioner Michael O'Rielly, who emphasized the importance of protecting the universal service fund and ratepayers against waste, fraud, and abuse.

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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.