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For Immediate Release

FCC EASES LIFELINE ENROLLMENT PROCESS FOR AMERICANS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Agency Gives Newly Unemployed Applicants Flexibility in Documenting Their Income-Based Eligibility for Lifeline

WASHINGTON, April 29, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today made it easier for individuals who have lost their employment during the coronavirus pandemic and who qualify for Lifeline benefits to enroll in the Lifeline program. Specifically, the FCC’s Wireline Competition Bureau temporarily waived the requirement that consumers seeking to qualify for the program based on their income must provide at least three consecutive months of income documentation. The Lifeline program provides monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualifying low-income consumers.

“COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our economy,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “Millions of Americans have lost their jobs, and it is important that they have the connectivity they need to apply for new jobs, take online classes, or get medical care via telehealth. I’m glad we’re granting this relief today, which will help those who may have only recently become eligible for Lifeline to sign up for the program and stay connected to vital broadband and phone services during the pandemic.”

Under FCC rules, consumers can demonstrate eligibility for the Lifeline program by either showing that they participate in one of the established qualifying programs, such as Medicaid or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or by showing that their household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines. Individuals who have lost their jobs during the pandemic may not be able to verify their income-based eligibility for Lifeline with three consecutive months of income documentation because their unemployment and related decrease in income began so recently. Under today’s waiver, until June 30, 2020, consumers demonstrating their income-based eligibility can instead submit an official document that confirms their current income information, such as a notice of unemployment benefits. The Bureau will monitor the situation to determine whether any additional extension of this waiver is appropriate.

In light of the ongoing pandemic, today’s order also extends the Bureau’s previous waivers of the Lifeline program’s recertification, reverification, general de-enrollment, and usage requirements until June 30, 2020. This extension will help ensure that no current Lifeline subscribers are involuntarily removed from the program during the waiver period.

For updates on the FCC’s wide array of actions to keep Americans connected during the coronavirus pandemic, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/coronavirus>. For more information on Chairman Pai’s Keep Americans Connected Pledge, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected>.

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