

# COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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October 1, 2015

Chairperson Tom Wheeler  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Ajit Pai  
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

**Re: Broadband Lifeline Rate *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization, WC Docket No. 11-42 Telecommunications Carriers Eligible for Universal Service Support, WC Docket No. 09-197 Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90***

Dear Chairperson Wheeler and Commissioners Clyburn, Pai, Rosenworcel, and O’Rielly:

On behalf of El Dorado County, California, and its 184,000 residents, I am writing to strongly support the Broadband Lifeline Rate and its potential to provide vital internet access to our most needy residents. As local government elected officials, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors is committed to closing the Digital Divide because it is one of the most powerful strategies to help the next generation succeed in a competitive global economy. Access to affordable high-speed Internet at home is a vital tool to achieve this goal. We commend the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for establishing a path to empower all Americans with high-speed Internet access in the National Broadband Plan, and we support your announcements to provide a widely-available affordable broadband rate for all low-income households through a Broadband Lifeline Program.

More than 20% of all California households remain offline and in this Digital Age are being left behind at an accelerating pace, without access to necessary government information public services that are online. According to the 2015 Annual Survey on broadband adoption in California, the Digital Divide persists for disadvantaged communities with large percentages of households not connected at home—35% of low-income households (under \$20,000 annual income); 30% of Latino families (37% for Spanish-speaking households); and 41% of people with disabilities. Yet, participation in daily life now requires broadband access at home for job applications, school homework, healthcare coverage, workforce training, and education scholarships.

Therefore, we respectfully urge you to design a successful Broadband Lifeline Program by taking the following actions:

- Establish an affordable high-speed Internet service plan for all low-income households offered by and through all broadband providers (in the \$10/month range) with sufficient speeds and a wireless modem for compatibility with school-issued devices. A Broadband Lifeline Program should augment Telephone Lifeline and not force consumers to choose between the two necessary technologies and programs.
- Capitalize an independent fund to support Community-Based Organizations, schools, and libraries through performance-based grants to assist in enrolling eligible low-income households and participate in true public-private partnerships.
- Appoint an oversight advisory body to ensure transparency and accountability with a broad base of stakeholders and community leaders knowledgeable about broadband adoption.

We support the goal in the National Broadband Plan, “to create a high-performance America—a more productive, creative, efficient America in which affordable broadband is available everywhere and everyone has the means and skills to use valuable broadband applications.” The FCC has the opportunity to significantly move towards achieving this goal by enacting a workable Broadband Lifeline Program. We urge bold action and we welcome the opportunity to work together to get all residents of El Dorado County, all Californians, and all Americans online.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact my office at 530-621-5652 or at [BOSTHREE@edcgov.us](mailto:BOSTHREE@edcgov.us). Thank you.

Sincerely,

BRIAN VEERKAMP, Chairperson  
Board of Supervisors  
El Dorado County, California

Cc: Supervisor Shiva Frentzen