## Union Calendar No.

117TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION H.R.7132

[Report No. 117-]

To preserve safe access to communications services for survivors of domestic violence and other crimes, and for other purposes.

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 17, 2022

Ms. Kuster (for herself and Ms. Eshoo) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

July --, 2022

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on March 17, 2022]

## A BILL

To preserve safe access to communications services for survivors of domestic violence and other crimes, and for other purposes.

1	Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2	tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3	SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
4	This Act may be cited as the "Safe Connections Act
5	of 2022".
6	SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.
7	Except as otherwise provided in this Act, terms used
8	in this Act that are defined in section 345(a) of the Commu-
9	nications Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of this Act,
10	have the meanings given those terms in such section 345(a).
11	SEC. 3. FINDINGS.
12	Congress finds the following:
13	(1) Domestic violence, dating violence, stalking,
14	sexual assault, human trafficking, and related crimes
15	are life-threatening issues and have lasting and harm-
16	ful effects on individuals, families, and entire commu-
17	nities.
18	(2) Survivors often lack meaningful support and
19	options when establishing independence from an
20	abuser, including barriers such as financial insecu-
21	rity and limited access to reliable communications
22	tools to maintain essential connections with family,
23	social safety networks, employers, and support serv-

24

ices.

1	(3) Perpetrators of violence and abuse described
2	in paragraph (1) increasingly use technological and
3	communications tools to exercise control over, mon-
4	itor, and abuse their victims.
5	(4) Communications law can play a public in-
6	terest role in the promotion of safety, life, and prop-
7	erty with respect to the types of violence and abuse
8	described in paragraph (1). For example, independent
9	access to a wireless phone plan can assist survivors
10	in establishing security and autonomy.
11	(5) Safeguards within communications services
12	can serve a role in preventing abuse and narrowing
13	the digital divide experienced by survivors of abuse.
14	SEC. 4. PROTECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS
15	WITHIN COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES.
16	Part I of title III of the Communications Act of 1934
17	(47 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
18	the following:
19	"SEC. 345. PROTECTION OF SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIO-
20	LENCE, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, AND RELATED
21	CRIMES.
22	"(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:
23	"(1) Abuser.—The term 'abuser' means an in-
24	dividual who has committed or allegedly committed a
25	covered act against—

1	"(A) an individual who seeks relief under
2	subsection (b); or
3	"(B) an individual in the care of an indi-
4	vidual who seeks relief under subsection (b).
5	"(2) Covered act.—
6	"(A) In General.—The term 'covered act'
7	means conduct that constitutes—
8	"(i) a crime described in section
9	40002(a) of the Violence Against Women
10	Act of 1994 (34 U.S.C. 12291(a)), including
11	domestic violence, dating violence, sexual
12	assault, stalking, and sex trafficking;
13	"(ii) an act or practice described in
14	paragraph (11) or (12) of section 103 of the
15	Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000
16	(22 U.S.C. 7102) (relating to severe forms of
17	trafficking in persons and sex trafficking,
18	respectively); or
19	"(iii) an act under State law, Tribal
20	law, or the Uniform Code of Military Jus-
21	tice that is similar to an offense described
22	in clause (i) or (ii).
23	"(B) Conviction not required.—Nothing
24	in subparagraph (A) shall be construed to re-
25	quire a criminal conviction or any other deter-

1	mination of a court in order for conduct to con-
2	stitute a covered act.
3	"(3) Covered provider.—The term 'covered
4	provider' means a provider of a private mobile service
5	or commercial mobile service, as those terms are de-
6	fined in section $332(d)$ .
7	"(4) Primary account holder.—The term
8	'primary account holder' means an individual who is
9	a party to a mobile service contract with a covered
10	provider.
11	"(5) Shared mobile service contract.—The
12	term 'shared mobile service contract'—
13	"(A) means a mobile service contract for an
14	account that includes not less than 2 consumers;
15	and
16	"(B) does not include enterprise services of-
17	fered by a covered provider.
18	"(6) Survivor.—The term 'survivor' means an
19	individual who is not less than 18 years old and—
20	"(A) against whom a covered act has been
21	committed or allegedly committed; or
22	"(B) who cares for another individual
23	against whom a covered act has been committed
24	or allegedly committed (provided that the indi-

1	vidual providing care did not commit or alleg-
2	edly commit the covered act).
3	"(b) Separation of Lines From Shared Mobile
4	Service Contract.—
5	"(1) In general.—Not later than 2 business
6	days after receiving a completed line separation re-
7	quest from a survivor pursuant to subsection (c), a
8	covered provider shall, as applicable, with respect to
9	a shared mobile service contract under which the sur-
10	vivor and the abuser each use a line—
11	"(A) separate the line of the survivor, and
12	the line of any individual in the care of the sur-
13	vivor, from the shared mobile service contract; or
14	"(B) separate the line of the abuser from the
15	shared mobile service contract.
16	"(2) Limitations on penalties, fees, and
17	OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—Except as provided in
18	paragraphs (5) through (7), a covered provider may
19	not make separation of a line from a shared mobile
20	service contract under paragraph (1) contingent on
21	any requirement other than the requirements under
22	subsection (c), including—
23	"(A) payment of a fee, penalty, or other
24	charge;

1	"(B) maintaining contractual or billing re-
2	sponsibility of a separated line with the pro-
3	vider;
4	"(C) approval of separation by the primary
5	account holder, if the primary account holder is
6	not the survivor;
7	"(D) a prohibition or limitation, including
8	one described in subparagraph (A), on number
9	portability, provided such portability is tech-
10	nically feasible, or a request to change phone
11	numbers;
12	"(E) a prohibition or limitation on the sep-
13	aration of lines as a result of arrears accrued by
14	$the\ account;$
15	"(F) an increase in the rate charged for the
16	mobile service plan of the primary account hold-
17	er with respect to service on any remaining line
18	or lines; or
19	"(G) any other limitation or requirement
20	not listed under subsection (c).
21	"(3) Rule of construction.—Nothing in
22	paragraph (2) shall be construed to require a covered
23	provider to provide a rate plan for the primary ac-
24	count holder that is not otherwise commercially avail-
25	able.

	9
1	"(4) Remote option.—A covered provider shall
2	offer a survivor the ability to submit a line separa-
3	tion request under subsection (c) through secure re-
4	mote means that are easily navigable, provided that
5	remote options are commercially available and tech-
6	nically feasible.
7	"(5) Responsibility for transferred tele-
8	PHONE NUMBERS.—Notwithstanding paragraph (2),
9	beginning on the date on which a covered provider
10	transfers billing responsibilities for and use of a tele-
11	phone number or numbers to a survivor under para-
12	graph (1)(A) in response to a line separation request
13	submitted by the survivor under subsection (c), unless
14	ordered otherwise by a court, the survivor shall as-
15	sume financial responsibility, including for monthly
16	service costs, for the transferred telephone number or
17	numbers.
18	"(6) Responsibility for transferred tele-
19	PHONE NUMBERS FROM A SURVIVOR'S ACCOUNT.—
20	Notwithstanding paragraph (2), upon the transfer of
21	a telephone number under paragraph (1)(B) in re-
22	sponse to a line separation request submitted by a

sponse to a line separation request submitted by a survivor under subsection (c), the survivor shall have no further financial responsibilities to the transferring covered provider for the services provided by the

1	transferring covered provider for the telephone num-
2	ber or for any mobile device associated with the tele-
3	phone number.
4	"(7) Responsibility for mobile device.—
5	Notwithstanding paragraph (2), beginning on the
6	date on which a covered provider transfers billing re-
7	sponsibilities for and rights to a telephone number or
8	numbers to a survivor under paragraph (1)(A) in re-
9	sponse to a line separation request submitted by the
10	survivor under subsection (c), unless otherwise ordered
11	by a court, the survivor shall not assume financial re-
12	sponsibility for any mobile device associated with the
13	separated line, unless the survivor purchased the mo-
14	bile device, or affirmatively elects to maintain posses-
15	sion of the mobile device.
16	"(8) Notice to survivor.—If a covered pro-
17	vider separates a line from a shared mobile service
18	contract under paragraph (1) and the primary ac-
19	count holder is not the survivor, the covered provider
20	shall notify the survivor of the date on which the cov-
21	ered provider intends to give any formal notice to the
22	primary account holder.
23	"(c) Line Separation Request.—
24	"(1) In general.—In the case of a survivor
25	seeking to separate a line from a shared mobile serv-

1	ice contract, the survivor shall submit to the covered
2	provider a line separation request that—
3	"(A) verifies that an individual who uses a
4	line under the shared mobile service contract has
5	committed or allegedly committed a covered act
6	against the survivor or an individual in the sur-
7	vivor's care, by providing—
8	"(i) a copy of a signed affidavit from
9	a licensed medical or mental health care
10	provider, licensed military medical or men-
11	tal health care provider, licensed social
12	worker, victim services provider, or licensed
13	military victim services provider, or an em-
14	ployee of a court, acting within the scope of
15	that person's employment; or
16	"(ii) a copy of a police report, state-
17	ments provided by police, including mili-
18	tary police, to magistrates or judges, charg-
19	ing documents, protective or restraining or-
20	ders, military protective orders, or any
21	other official record that documents the cov-
22	ered act;
23	"(B) in the case of relief sought under sub-
24	section (b)(1)(A), with respect to—

1	"(i) a line used by the survivor that
2	the survivor seeks to have separated, states
3	that the survivor is the user of that specific
4	line; and
5	"(ii) a line used by an individual in
6	the care of the survivor that the survivor
7	seeks to have separated, includes an affi-
8	davit setting forth that the individual—
9	"(I) is in the care of the survivor;
10	and
11	"(II) is the user of that specific
12	line; and
13	"(C) requests relief under subparagraph (A)
14	or (B) of subsection (b)(1) and identifies each
15	line that should be separated.
16	"(2) Communications from covered pro-
17	VIDERS.—
18	"(A) In general.—A covered provider
19	shall notify a survivor seeking relief under sub-
20	section (b) in clear and accessible language that
21	the covered provider may contact the survivor, or
22	designated representative of the survivor, to con-
23	firm the line separation, or if the covered pro-
24	vider is unable to complete the line separation

1	for any reason, pursuant to subparagraphs (B)
2	and $(C)$ .
3	"(B) Remote means.—A covered provider
4	shall notify a survivor under subparagraph (A)
5	through remote means, provided that remote
6	means are commercially available and tech-
7	nically feasible.
8	"(C) Election of manner of contact.—
9	When completing a line separation request sub-
10	mitted by a survivor through remote means
11	under paragraph (1), a covered provider shall
12	allow the survivor to elect in the manner in
13	which the covered provider may—
14	"(i) contact the survivor, or designated
15	representative of the survivor, in response to
16	the request, if necessary; or
17	"(ii) notify the survivor, or designated
18	representative of the survivor, of the inabil-
19	ity of the covered provider to complete the
20	$line\ separation.$
21	"(3) Enhanced protections under state
22	LAW.—This subsection shall not affect any law or reg-
23	ulation of a State providing communications protec-
24	tions for survivors (or any similar category of indi-
25	viduals) that has less stringent requirements for pro-

1	viding evidence of a covered act (or any similar cat-
2	egory of conduct) than this subsection.
3	"(d) Confidential and Secure Treatment of
4	Personal Information.—
5	"(1) In General.—Notwithstanding section
6	222(c)(2), a covered provider and any officer, direc-
7	tor, employee, vendor, or agent thereof shall treat any
8	information submitted by a survivor under subsection
9	(c) as confidential and securely dispose of the infor-
10	mation not later than 90 days after receiving the in-
11	formation.
12	"(2) Rule of construction.—Nothing in
13	paragraph (1) shall be construed to prohibit a covered
14	provider from maintaining, for longer than the period
15	specified in that paragraph, a record that verifies
16	that a survivor fulfilled the conditions of a line sepa-
17	ration request under subsection (c).
18	"(e) Availability of Information to Con-
19	${\it SUMERSA \ covered \ provider \ shall \ make \ information \ about}$
20	the options and process described in subsections (b) and (c)
21	readily available to consumers—
22	"(1) on the website and the mobile application of
23	the provider;
24	"(2) in physical stores; and

1	"(3) in other forms of public-facing consumer
2	communication.
3	"(f) Technical Infeasibility.—
4	"(1) In general.—The requirement to effectuate
5	a line separation request pursuant to subsection
6	(b)(1) shall not apply to a covered provider if the cov-
7	ered provider cannot operationally or technically ef-
8	fectuate the request.
9	"(2) Notification.—If a covered provider can-
10	not operationally or technically effectuate a line sepa-
11	ration request as described in paragraph (1), the cov-
12	ered provider shall—
13	"(A) notify the survivor who submitted the
14	request of that infeasibility—
15	"(i) at the time of the request; or
16	"(ii) in the case of a survivor who has
17	submitted the request using remote means,
18	not later than 2 business days after receiv-
19	ing the request; and
20	"(B) provide the survivor with information
21	about other alternatives to submitting a line sep-
22	aration request, including starting a new line of
23	service.
24	"(q) Liability Protection.—

1	"(1) In general.—A covered provider and any
2	officer, director, employee, vendor, or agent thereof
3	shall not be subject to liability for any claims deriv-
4	ing from an action taken or omission made with re-
5	spect to compliance with this section and the rules
6	adopted to implement this section.
7	"(2) Commission authority.—Nothing in this
8	subsection shall limit the authority of the Commission
9	to enforce this section or any rules or regulations pro-
10	mulgated by the Commission pursuant to this sec-
11	tion.".
12	SEC. 5. RULEMAKING ON PROTECTIONS FOR SURVIVORS OF
13	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.
14	(a) Definitions.—In this section—
15	(1) the term "Affordable Connectivity Program"
16	means the program established under section 904(b) of
17	$division\ N\ of\ the\ Consolidated\ Appropriations\ Act,$
18	2021 (Public Law 116–260), as amended by section
19	60502 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
20	(Public Law 117–58), or any successor program;
21	(2) the term "appropriate congressional commit-
22	tees" means the Committee on Commerce, Science,
23	and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee
24	on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representa-
25	tives:

1	(3) the term "Commission" means the Federal
2	$Communications \ Commission;$
3	(4) the term "covered hotline" means a hotline
4	related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual
5	assault, stalking, sex trafficking, severe forms of traf-
6	ficking in persons, or any other similar act;
7	(5) the term "designated program" means the
8	program designated by the Commission under sub-
9	section $(b)(2)(A)(i)$ to provide emergency communica-
10	tions support to survivors;
11	(6) the term "Lifeline program" means the pro-
12	gram set forth in subpart E of part 54 of title 47,
13	Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regula-
14	tion);
15	(7) the term "text message" has the meaning
16	given the term in section 227(e)(8) of the Commu-
17	nications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 227(e)(8)); and
18	(8) the term "voice service" has the meaning
19	given such term in section 4(a) of the Pallone-Thune
20	Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and
21	Deterrence Act (47 U.S.C. $227b(a)$ ).
22	(b) Rulemakings.—
23	(1) Line separations.—
24	(A) In General.—Not later than 18
25	months after the date of enactment of this Act,

1	the Commission shall adopt rules to implement
2	section 345 of the Communications Act of 1934,
3	as added by section 4 of this Act.
4	(B) Considerations.—In adopting rules
5	under subparagraph (A), the Commission shall
6	consider—
7	(i) privacy protections;
8	(ii) account security and fraud detec-
9	tion;
10	(iii) account billing procedures;
11	(iv) procedures for notification of sur-
12	vivors about line separation processes;
13	(v) notice to primary account holders;
14	(vi) situations in which a covered pro-
15	vider cannot operationally or technically
16	separate a telephone number or numbers
17	from a shared mobile service contract such
18	that the provider cannot effectuate a line
19	$separation\ request;$
20	(vii) the requirements for remote sub-
21	mission of a line separation request, includ-
22	ing how that option facilitates submission
23	of verification information and meets the
24	other requirements of section 345 of the

1	Communications Act of 1934, as added by
2	section 4 of this Act;
3	(viii) feasibility of remote options for
4	small covered providers;
5	(ix) implementation timelines, includ-
6	ing those for small covered providers;
7	(x) financial responsibility for trans-
8	ferred telephone numbers;
9	(xi) whether and how the survivor can
10	affirmatively elect to take financial respon-
11	sibility for the mobile device associated with
12	the separated line;
13	(xii) compliance with subpart U of
14	part 64 of title 47, Code of Federal Regula-
15	tions, or any successor regulations (relating
16	to customer proprietary network informa-
17	tion) or any other legal or law enforcement
18	requirements; and
19	(xiii) ensuring covered providers have
20	the necessary account information to com-
21	ply with the rules and with section 345 of
22	the Communications Act of 1934, as added
23	by section 4 of this Act.
24	(2) Emergency communications support for
25	SURVIVORS —

1	(A) In General.—Not later than 18
2	months after the date of enactment of this Act,
3	or as part of a general rulemaking proceeding
4	relating to the Lifeline program or the Affordable
5	Connectivity Program, whichever occurs earlier,
6	the Commission shall adopt rules that—
7	(i) designate a single program, which
8	shall be either the Lifeline program or the
9	Affordable Connectivity Program, to provide
10	emergency communications support to sur-
11	vivors in accordance with this paragraph;
12	and
13	(ii) allow a survivor who is suffering
14	from financial hardship and meets the re-
15	quirements under section $345(c)(1)$ of the
16	Communications Act of 1934, as added by
17	section 4 of this Act, without regard to
18	whether the survivor meets the otherwise ap-
19	plicable eligibility requirements of the des-
20	ignated program, to—
21	(I) enroll in the designated pro-
22	gram as quickly as is feasible; and
23	(II) participate in the designated
24	program based on such qualifications
25	for not more than 6 months.

1	(B) Considerations.—In adopting rules
2	under subparagraph (A), the Commission shall
3	consider—
4	(i) how survivors who are eligible for
5	relief and elected to separate a line under
6	section $345(c)(1)$ of the Communications
7	Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of this
8	Act, but whose lines could not be separated
9	due to operational or technical infeasibility,
10	can participate in the designated program;
11	and
12	(ii) confidentiality in the transfer and
13	retention of any necessary documentation
14	regarding the eligibility of a survivor to en-
15	roll in the designated program.
16	(C) EVALUATION.—Not later than 2 years
17	after completing the rulemaking under subpara-
18	graph (A), the Commission shall—
19	(i) evaluate the effectiveness of the
20	Commission's provision of support to sur-
21	vivors through the designated program;
22	(ii) assess the detection and elimi-
23	nation of fraud, waste, and abuse with re-
24	spect to the support described in clause (i);
25	and

1	(iii) submit to the appropriate congres-
2	sional committees a report that includes the
3	evaluation and assessment described in
4	clauses (i) and (ii), respectively.
5	(D) Rule of construction.—Nothing in
6	this paragraph shall be construed to limit the
7	ability of a survivor who meets the requirements
8	under section $345(c)(1)$ of the Communications
9	Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of this Act,
10	to participate in the designated program indefi-
11	nitely if the survivor otherwise qualifies for the
12	designated program under the rules of the des-
13	ignated program.
14	(E) Notification.—A covered provider
15	that receives a line separation request pursuant
16	to section 345 of the Communications Act of
17	1934, as added by section 4 of this Act, shall in-
18	form the survivor who submitted the request of—
19	(i) the existence of the designated pro-
20	gram;
21	(ii) who qualifies to participate in the
22	designated program under the rules adopted
23	under subparagraph (A) that are specially
24	applicable to survivors; and

1	(iii) how to participate in the des-
2	ignated program under the rules described
3	in clause (ii).
4	(3) Hotline calls.—
5	(A) In general.—Not later than 180 days
6	after the date of enactment of this Act, the Com-
7	mission shall commence a rulemaking proceeding
8	to consider whether to, and how the Commission
9	should—
10	(i) establish, and update on a monthly
11	basis, a central database of covered hotlines
12	to be used by a covered provider or a
13	wireline provider of voice service; and
14	(ii) require a covered provider or a
15	wireline provider of voice service to omit
16	from consumer-facing logs of calls or text
17	messages any records of calls or text mes-
18	sages to covered hotlines in the central data-
19	base described in clause (i), while maintain-
20	ing internal records of those calls and mes-
21	sages.
22	(B) Considerations.—The rulemaking
23	conducted under subparagraph (A) shall include
24	consideration of—

1	(i) the ability of law enforcement agen-
2	cies or survivors to access a log of calls or
3	text messages in a criminal investigation or
4	$civil\ proceeding;$
5	(ii) the ability of a covered provider or
6	a wireline provider of voice service to—
7	(I) identify logs that are con-
8	sumer-facing; and
9	(II) omit certain consumer-facing
10	logs, while maintaining internal
11	records of such calls and text messages;
12	and
13	(iii) any other factors associated with
14	the implementation of clauses (i) and (ii) to
15	protect survivors, including factors that
16	may impact smaller providers.
17	(C) No effect on law enforcement.—
18	Nothing in subparagraph (A) shall be construed
19	to—
20	(i) limit or otherwise affect the ability
21	of a law enforcement agency to access a log
22	of calls or text messages in a criminal in-
23	vestigation; or
24	(ii) alter or otherwise expand provider
25	requirements under the Communications

1	Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (Public
2	Law 103–414; 108 Stat. 4279) or the
3	amendments made by that Act.
4	(D) Compliance.—If the Commission es-
5	tablishes a central database through the rule-
6	making under subparagraph (A) and a covered
7	provider updates its own databases to match the
8	central database not less frequently than once
9	every 30 days, no cause of action shall lie or be
10	maintained in any court against the covered
11	provider or its officers, employees, or agents for
12	claims deriving from omission from consumer-
13	facing logs of calls or text messages of any
14	records of calls or text messages to covered hot-
15	lines in the central database.
16	SEC. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE.
17	The requirements under section 345 of the Commu-
18	nications Act of 1934, as added by section 4 of this Act,
19	shall take effect 60 days after the date on which the Federal
20	Communications Commission adopts the rules imple-
21	menting that section pursuant to section $5(b)(1)$ of this $Act$ .
22	SEC. 7. SAVINGS CLAUSE.
23	Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this
24	Act shall be construed to abrogate, limit, or otherwise affect
25	the provisions set forth in the Communications Assistance

- 1 for Law Enforcement Act (Public Law 103-414; 108 Stat.
- 2 4279) and the amendments made by that Act, any authority
- 3 granted to the Federal Communications Commission pursu-
- 4 ant to that Act or the amendments made by that Act, or
- 5 any regulations promulgated by the Federal Communica-
- 6 tions Commission pursuant to that Act or the amendments
- 7 made by that Act.