

**WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE**

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April 11, 2016

Members

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: NAACP STRONG OPPOSITION TO H.R. 4884, THE *CURB LIFELINE ACT OF 2016***

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the NAACP, our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization I strongly urge you to oppose and join us in working against H.R. 4884, the *CURB Lifeline Act of 2016*. This misguided legislation would unnecessarily put limits on the Lifeline program, one of the most successful federal programs to date in helping low income people to maintain telecommunications contact with crucial, often life-saving services; their families; and their communities. The NAACP strongly supports the Lifeline program and opposes any efforts to curb it, to limit it, or to otherwise hinder the positive impact Lifeline has had on the communities we serve and represent.

Given the clear benefits of the Lifeline program, it is inconceivable to the NAACP that there are those who wish to cap, curb, or otherwise harm this very effective program. All eligible households who want Lifeline should receive it without delay. There should be no waiting lists for eligible participants; no termination of benefits to eligible Lifeline participants due to budgetary constraints; and no decrease in the Lifeline benefit amount to accommodate additional households. Putting a dollar cap on Lifeline does *not* ensure program integrity; instead it denies millions of income-eligible families the assistance necessary to participate in essential activities needed for safety, security, and full integration into society, if not survival.

For 30 years, the Lifeline program has provided our nation's most vulnerable and chronically underserved communities with telephone service that would otherwise be unaffordable and out of reach. First implemented in 1985 by then-President Ronald Reagan and expanded in 2005 by then-President George W. Bush to include wireless service, the "Lifeline" program ensures that all Americans have the opportunities, assistance, and security that phone service brings. Lifeline is a successful program, currently enabling 12 million of our most vulnerable populations to call 911 and other emergency services, contact prospective and current employers, and connect with essential health, social, employment, and educational services.

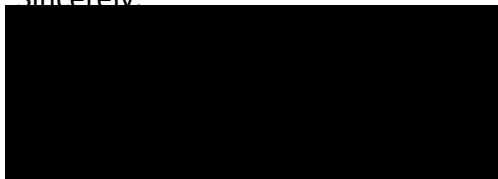
According to one Lifeline provider, more than 80% of Lifeline subscribers in 2011 had an average household income below \$15,000; more than 45% of Lifeline subscribers were Caucasian compared to 40% who were African American and 7% who were Hispanic.

Most recently, the FCC voted to expand Lifeline to include broadband internet services, a move strongly supported and applauded by the NAACP. This move will address the estimated nearly 100 million Americans who still do not have broadband Internet services at home. Studies have established that broadband adoption rates in urban and rural communities are largely associated with incomes levels and the high cost of broadband services. While more than 90% of the homes nationwide with incomes over \$50,000 a year have broadband Internet service, that figure drops to 68% for homes bringing in \$30,000-\$50,000 a year, and to less than half in households making under \$30,000. By expanding Broadband access, we will be enabling the most vulnerable among us, including unemployed workers who miss out on job announcements that are only listed online, students who go to fast-food restaurants to use the Wi-Fi hotspots to do homework, veterans who are unable to apply for their hard-earned benefits, and seniors who can't look up health information when they get sick, or other crucial services and assistance.

In January 2012, in response to reports of abuse of the program, the FCC reformed and modernized the Lifeline program to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse and to improve effectiveness and to reflect the changing needs of the communities served by Lifeline. While still on-going, these reforms have already yielded impressive results, and the NAACP applauds these efforts.

Thank you in advance for your attention to the deep support of the NAACP for the Lifeline program. I welcome any questions or comments you may have; please feel free to contact me at (202) 463-2940.

Sincerely,



Hilary O. Shelton  
Director, NAACP Washington Bureau &  
Senior Vice President for Policy and Advocacy